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POCKET NOVELS

Old Kyle, the Trailer.



OLD KYLE, THE TRAILER:

OR,

THE RENEGADE OF THE DELAWARES.

BY HENRY J. THOMAS.

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OLD KYLE, THE TRAILER.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

IT began to look very much as if Brandon Havens was caught in a dangerous dilemma. He had been on a hunting expedition, and on the previous day had become separated from the main party, and was hopelessly lost.

Furthermore, during the entire night and most of the forenoon, the windows of heaven had been opened, and the floods had poured down upon the earth, with all the exuberance of a tropical storm. The Rattlesnake river, along the bank of which he had been rambling, had begun rising the day before, as the result of the deluge near its head-waters away up in the Rocky Mountains ; so that now, in addition to the discomfort of feeling that he was lost, was the emphatically unpleasant sensation of the certainty that he was caught in the focus of a freshet.

Which happened in this manner.

Rattlesnake river was a large stream, which finallyouches into the Mississippi ; but in this section of Iowa it received the waters of a large tributary, which put into it at quite a sharp angle.

This junction took place something less than a mile below the point where we find Brandon Havens standing, and for a long distance above, scarcely half a mile separated the two streams, which gradually converged until the union took place.

On the long, narrow peninsula, separating these two streams, Havens had wandered off with his dog and gun, not knowing that there was no escape below, and that he was being rapidly shut in by the rising volume of water above him.

But as he advanced, and the roar of rushing waters increased on every hand, a suspicion of the true state of the

case began to dawn upon his mind, and he checked his footsteps, with the uncomfortable sensation of a man who feels that a great danger is bearing steadily down upon him, while he is deprived of the ability to get out of its path.

As he stood facing north, he could see the muddy waters of the Rattlesnake on the left, rushing impetuously forward, bearing upon its surface uprooted trees, stumps, brush, logs, and all the *débris* gathered by a large river, when, the first time, for a long while, it overleaps its bounds, and hurries with its varied freight on toward the ocean.

On the right, almost the same sight met his vision, except perhaps that the tributary, although swollen to triple its usual size, was still of less volume than the Rattlesnake; but, it seemed, if possible, to contain a greater mass of driftwood than the main stream.

Here and there, scattered over the dry land upon which the young hunter was standing, were large trees, while quite a plentiful mass of undergrowth was interspersed between. Havens was already wet to the skin, from his continued tramp through the wilderness, made wet by the previous rain.

"This begins to look serious, Wolf," said he, addressing his dog. "If you can lead the way out of the trouble, you can do more than I. Suppose I climb this tree here, and see whether I can take our bearings."

The dog whined and moved uneasily about, as if a vague sense of the common danger had impressed itself upon him; but he was as powerless as his master, and waited while the latter hastily climbed the nearest tree.

In a few moments the latter reached the top, and then, with his eye, carefully swept every part of the horizon.

The prospect could not have been worse. The river on either hand had swelled to the dimensions of a lake. As far as the eye could reach, the Rattlesnake spread, until, where it swept over the woods, only the swaying tops of the trees could be seen.

It was the same with the other stream. Overwhelmed by the volume of water precipitated upon them, from the network of rivers above, the only relief was in its widening out over the vast area of level land which composed the valley of the river.

The streams united a quarter of a mile below, although the usual point of junction was more than double that distance, and with every minute of the tumultuous rush, the lower point of the land was sinking under the combined volume of both currents.

Turning his eye to the northward, almost precisely the same thing was to be observed there. There being a fall or depression in the land, the two rivers, at a point several hundred yards distant, had overflowed the intervening land, so that in fact the hunter was beleaguered upon an island, which was rapidly going under the water.

Such was the situation of our hero, at the moment we introduce him to our reader. The afternoon was quite advanced, and in his wanderings he had not eaten a mouthful since the preceding day.

Wet, chilled and hungry, with many miles intervening between him and the party he had left in such hopeful spirits, and with the intention of rejoining them at nightfall—while the tumultuous tide swept upon every side—while it crept up higher and higher, nearer and nearer, as if angry and impatient for its prey, that could only shrink and draw himself within himself—we say that in such a situation as this, the lot of Brandon Havens was not to be envied by any one.

The young hunter did not descend until he had made a careful reconnoissance of his position, and had computed as accurately as possible his real peril.

The first plan that naturally suggested itself was that of remaining in the tree until the flood subsided enough for him to resume his tramp to the northward, retracing his steps as nearly as possible.

But there were several fatal objections to this. From the swiftness with which the water was rising, the island upon which he stood would probably be submerged to the depth of several feet before morning. It was not at all improbable that the depth would be still greater, in which case the tree would undoubtedly be uprooted and borne downward with the swift current, and even should it breast the rush of water, and stand firm, it would be likely to require several days before the subsidence would allow him to leave his perch—a time sufficient for him to starve to death.

Besides this, the rise would sweep his dog away and drown him—a prospect which occasioned Havens more pain than his own danger, for there are few stronger attachments in this world than that which exists between the hunter and his faithful dog, and the last thought that he could entertain with any degree of equanimity was that of separating from the true and tried companion of his rambles.

All this was many years ago, when Iowa was a "howling wilderness," and the wild animal was less dreaded than the wild Indian.

Brandon Havens and a half-dozen others had ventured into this solitude on a hunt, when he had become separated in the manner mentioned, and was in the dilemma which has been described.

The only possible course that seemed open to him was to descend to the ground, prepare a sort of raft as quickly as possible, and embark upon the rushing current.

"We will be sure to come out *somewhere*," he reflected, as he descended the tree, "and that is more than we can expect if we remain here."

But an appalling obstacle presented itself. No material was available of which a raft could be made. Wood there was in abundance, but, at the present, it was growing firmly in the ground, and he had not the means at hand to extract it.

Loose, buoyant logs, such as he needed, were sweeping by him in the current, but none were within reach from where he stood.

However, Havens could only trust to Providence and prepare for the worst. He strapped his rifle firmly to his back, fastened his other weapons and clothing as securely as possible, and was ready to meet whatever the Fates might bring him.

Havens was a capital swimmer, and he was now to make an attempt to turn it to account. He had resolved to plunge into the river, and swim out to the first goodly-sized log that it looked possible to reach. Astride of this, with Wolf alongside, there was the certainty of being carried *somewhere*, even if not into the Gulf of Mexico.

The hunter took his station within a few inches of the

water's edge. He had stood there but ten minutes when it had crept up to his feet, and when the same time had again passed, his moccasins were completely covered with the cold current.

Suddenly his eye caught the prong-like roots and branches of an immense oak that came rushing down the streams, tossing, sinking and rising, like some sea-monster struggling in agony.

"That is to be our raft, Wolf," he exclaimed, wading out a few steps, so as to be ready to intercept it at the proper moment.

At the very instant of starting, a whine from the dog arrested his attention.

Following the direction in which the dumb animal was gazing, Havens was not a little surprised to observe an Indian canoe coming swiftly down upon the tossing waves of yellow water.

His first impression was that of additional danger, but a second glance showed him that it contained no one, or if so, the occupant was invisible.

"Ah, Wolf! that is fortunate!" he exclaimed, the next moment. "If we can get into that, we stand some chance of doing something for ourselves."

No time was to be lost, and the next minute the young hunter had waded out to his waist. Here the force of the current was so strong that he could barely maintain himself, but he managed to hold on until the cockle-shell of a vessel had danced almost opposite, when he boldly stepped into deeper water, and the next moment was bravely combating the stream.

Had our hero been an experienced hunter, he would have seen that in the appearance of the Indian canoe which, to say the least, was suspicious.

Light and buoyant as it was, it should have floated like a cork, while the depth to which it sunk showed conclusively that there was some weight inside to make it do this.

True, it might be the water, which it had received from the falling rain, or which had been dashed into it, as it was tossed hither and thither; but there was the greater probability that it was something more important than that.

But no suspicion entered the head of Brandon Havens, as he bravely breasted the waves, and struck out toward the boat, intent only upon gaining the prize.

As he swam, with the dog at his side, the latter outswam him, and reached the canoe first. Putting his paws upon the gunwale, Wolf was about to leap in, when he abruptly loosened his hold and swam away again.

This action was strange, to say the least, and for the first time, a thrill of suspicion shot through the breast of the hunter, and with his hand almost upon the edge of the boat, he hesitated and floated idly beside it.

But his situation was too serious to admit of delay, and swimming directly beside the canoe, he raised himself suddenly and carefully half his length out of the water, taking good care not to touch the canoe with his hands, nor to make any plashing or unusual noise.

This gave him his coveted view of the interior of the boat, and this is what he saw!

A human figure covered with an Indian blanket and a shawl!

The first supposition of the hunter was that it was a savage asleep.

"And that being the case, I had better make myself scarce," reflected Havens, as he turned about and began paddling away.

But he had taken scarcely a dozen strokes, when something restrained him.

"Perhaps it is not an Indian! It may be a friend!"

Impelled by an influence which he could not understand, Brandon soon found himself beside the boat again.

The second look disclosed the person lying in the same position, but there was a foot incased in a moccasin visible.

And this was so small and symmetrical that he was certain it could belong to none but a woman, and not of common birth.

Why was she here? Had she been carried away from her home somewhere up the country, or was she a captive of the Indians, who had been freed by the interposition of the freshet?

A slight, petite form, covered with a shawl, nothing but one foot visible!

And that foot as if it might belong to a princess of royal blood!

Perhaps some chieftain's daughter, who had wandered off upon the bosom of the rushing river, who had toiled with the paddle at her side, until, exhausted, she lay down and slept the dreamless sleep of a child of nature?

Perhaps she was dead, and had been set adrift by her not unfeeling parents, who deemed this a fitting tomb for one who had been reared in their lodge?

If living, was she aware of the danger to which she was subjected? Did she know that wild beasts might steal upon and destroy her as she slept?

Did she not know that there were wild men in these solitudes who were more dangerous even than the wild beasts?

These were the questions which thronged upon his mind as he floated doubtfully beside the canoe. Then came the important query again:

"Is she dead?"

That motionless silence, that indifference to the peril by which she was surrounded, all looked as if she were not of this world.

Havens had floated beside the boat until he found himself growing tired, when he concluded that it was time to act.

His weight careened the boat greatly, but it disturbed not the sleeper, and he succeeded in getting into the canoe without injury to its delicate structure.

Wolf quickly followed, and the combined weight of the inmates sunk it quite low in the current.

There was just room inside for himself and dog without disturbing the sleeper, whose feet alone were visible, as they peeped from beneath the rich, brilliant shawl which enveloped her form.

A small Indian paddle lay within the boat beside her, and Havens succeeded in lifting it without disturbing her in the least.

Before indulging in any farther speculations regarding the unknown, prudence told the hunter to take his bearings.

One glance showed that he was in a vast waste of water. The surging, rushing mass of yellow fluid, dashed here and there into foam, the immense breadth stretching out on every

hand, the swaying, up-torn trees, and the large amount of *débris*—all these betokened the great extent of the freshet.

Whither was he going?

Havens knew that the Rattlesnake river found its way into the Mississippi, and so on eventually to the Gulf of Mexico but how far below his present situation the junction took place he could only conjecture.

Away up in this wild section of the country, where he had been warned against the fury of the Indians, who were now upon the war-path, he knew there was danger of encountering them at any time, and he never raised his eyes without a shudder, lest he should see some of these dreaded red-skins near at hand.

But the coast was clear, and his thoughts naturally reverted to the unknown being with whom he was being borne swiftly downward upon the rushing waters.

Already a sort of romantic interest had taken possession of him, and he found himself a prey to the most intense curiosity.

Could it be that she was dead?

A cold fear ran over him at the thought, and he felt almost like plunging into the cold river again, were such the case.

All the time, Havens, from some cause which he could not give, looked upon the stranger as of his own race and blood; but every indication was that she was an Indian.

However, his curiosity was becoming so great that he decided to gratify it at once.

Respectfully and reverentially, he bent toward her and slowly and carefully drew the shawl from the face of the sleeping unknown, and with a beating heart leaned forward, as the mariner gazes out upon the vasty deep in his attempt to define the dim sail.

To his unbounded surprise, the movement revealed the face of a young woman, of his own race, and one, too, of extraordinary grace and beauty.

CHAPTER II.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

BRANDON HAVENS was dumb with amazement!

Never, in all his wanderings, had he encountered what seemed to him such form and features of marvelous beauty. As she lay, with the side of her face upon her arm, the pink tint of the sea-shell was upon the well-rounded cheek, and the penciled eyebrows were as if drawn in ink. A mass of luxuriant dark hair rippled and rolled away in a negligent manner over the symmetrical shoulders, while the faint, regular breathing betokened not death, but rosy health.

Slight as was the withdrawing of the shawl, it awakened the fair sleeper. The sweep of the cool air upon the cheek was probably what aroused her; for, while the hunter was gazing in rapt admiration, she suddenly opened her eyes, and gazed about her with the confused air of one when awaking from a profound sleep.

Naturally her first glance fell upon Brandon Havens, who could not avoid a smile at her extreme amazement; but he politely raised his hat, and she immediately came to a sitting position, and stared quickly and successively in every direction, as if she had not the remotest idea of her situation.

Then in the gasping tones of complete bewilderment, she asked, turning toward her companion:

"Where am I?"

"Safe," was the reply of the hunter, who again bowed pleasantly to her.

"Who are you?"

"Brandon Havens, your humble servant."

"How came I here?"

As succinctly as possible our hero related the particulars of what has already been given the reader. During the recital, the girl listened like one who was dreaming or whose thoughts were far away.

So great was her abstraction, that the narrator suspected she did not hear his words, and paused.

"Go on," she instantly said, and so he completed his story, adding, when he had finished:

"Some strange chance has thrown us together, fair lady, and it will not be long, in all probability, before we separate. For however long or short a time it may be my privilege to be in your society, my wish is that when we separate, you will recall nothing that will cause you regret that our meeting ever occurred."

She bowed her head in acknowledgment, but made no further reply to this.

Havens was silent for a few moments, but his curiosity was too great for him to remain so very long.

"Surely you will allow me to ask your name?"

"Adrian Woodland."

"As pleasing a name as is your general appearance," thought the hunter, and he added, aloud:

"My surprise was never greater than when I swam out to the canoe and found you in it."

"I did not know that I was here or even in the boat, until I was awakened."

"That is strange," exclaimed Havens, and he then awaited the succeeding explanation; but it did not come.

"Do not your friends know of what has befallen you--of your sad misfortune?"

"Friends?" she repeated, looking at the speaker with such a mournful expression, that he was touched to the heart. "I have no friends."

"You have *one*, who is ready to risk his life for you," exclaimed Havens, who was earnest in his enthusiastic devotion to the unknown fair one, who had been so singularly thrown upon his protection. "Have no fears while it is my privilege to protect you."

She covered her face, as if overcome with emotion, at the recollection of some great misfortune, while the hunter respectfully maintained silence until she overcame her grief and was herself again.

"I trust I do not invade your privacy, if I express my curiosity as to how you came in this anomalous position?"

This was said in a most decidedly interrogative manner, and the reply was awaited with an anxiety which it would be difficult to express.

But it did not come. From some cause or other, Adrian Woodland showed no disposition to reveal what certainly was an extraordinary history.

She had turned her head aside, and was looking off over the water, which stretched away like a vast inland sea. They were then in the immediate vicinity of a large forest. The tops of the trees protruded above the water like common rushes, and seemed to the two in the canoe to be dashing up against the current with a furious impetuosity, impossible to imagine.

In a few minutes, this piece of woods, numbering many acres in extent, was passed, and they danced forward again, upon the broadening, yellow waters, with their limitless freight of logs, trees, stumps and *débris*.

Then she gradually turned her head, until she gazed directly up the river, while Havens, holding the paddle in his hand, impatiently awaited her reply.

She had looked but a few moments, when she started and exclaimed :

"*There! they come!*"

"Whom do you mean?" asked the hunter, following the direction of her finger and failing to see any thing at all.

"*The Indians!*" she answered, again covering her face, and shuddering, as if seeking to shut out some fearful picture or scene from her thoughts.

The hunter carefully raised himself, until he was standing nearly erect in the boat, and then gazed keenly up-stream, but he detected nothing that looked like a canoe or boat, in which, if she really saw the red-skins, they must have been.

Resolved to press all the questions he could without using rudeness, he continued :

"To what tribe of Indians do they belong?"

"Delaware."

"Ah! yes; I have heard that there are some of those people in the upper part of Iowa Territory."

This was said at a venture, as Bravlon knew nothing of the sort.

"You must have been mistaken," said he, "in thinking they were following us. I have looked carefully up-stream, and can see nothing of them."

"No; I was not wrong," she replied. "There are a half-dozen of them, in a log canoe and they are paddling very fast after me. Can we not get away from them?"

"They must pass over my dead body to reach you!"

This may have a boastful look, as our readers see it, but Brandon Havens was in earnest, when he uttered it, and he would have sought for that friendless fair one with all the bravery of a cavalier of the olden times.

"You can not keep them away," she wailed. "They can paddle faster than you, and they are coming—I know they are."

Her singular persistency had its effect upon Havens, who began to believe that she might be right, after all, in announcing the coming of their mutual enemies.

It was this supposition that caused him to take up the paddle, and dip it into the current at his side.

As near as he could judge, the afternoon was more than half gone, and still there were no signs of land on either side, where they could effect a landing.

In fact, there was something so pleasant in thus "floating with the stream," in the society of the most beautiful woman upon which his eyes had ever rested, that a contemplation of its termination was the reverse of pleasant. His hunger, his wet and clinging garments, were forgotten in the new and delightful emotions which now found room in his breast.

He found it almost impossible to remove his gaze from her face, and it was only when he became sensible of his rudeness that he did so.

Yet, despite the ethereal mental condition in which the romantic young man found himself, he could not become entirely insensible to his surroundings.

The rain had ceased during the forenoon, but there were signs of the storm renewing again. Dark, heavy clouds obscured half the sky, and there was a mist in the air, such as is frequently seen, at times when there is a superabundance of moisture in the atmosphere.

"Pleasant as it was drifting in this manner, he felt that his

duty to the one placed under his charge, made it necessary to cast about for some means of escape from their present predicament, and like the shipwrecked mariner he looked and sighed for land.

The best way to get out of a current is neither to row with nor against it, but as the mariner caught in the cyclone does, to take a course at right angles.

So Havens turned his boat directly across the stream, and plied the paddle with all the skill of which he was capable.

Adrian watched his labor with no little interest. When the exertion had continued for something less than an hour, she exclaimed :

"There is the land!"

The hunter had not noticed it yet, but he saw that she was right. Far away to the right, the boundary of Rattlesnake river could be distinguished.

As the land made a decided rise, the bank was clearly defined, and there was the cheering prospect of placing their feet upon *terra firma* again.

Havens bent all his energies toward reaching the shore, which was at a great distance. When his eye was fixed upon some stationary object he gained some idea of the great velocity with which they were being driven down-stream.

As he neared the land, he observed with pleasure that they had been carried so far southward as to be beyond the region of the storm. The green woods showed that no rain had fallen very recently, and the threatened renewal of it had disappeared, so that the sky was clear and pleasant.

Speeding onward, they succeeded in reaching the shore, and Havens drove the canoe with such force against the sandy beach, that the prow remained fast, although the stern was swung round by the velocity of the current.

Wolf was the first to spring out, and he was followed instantly by Brandon, who drew the light vessel far up the bank, and then assisted his friend upon land.

"The flood is cheated of its prey this time," exclaimed our hero, with a glow of pleasure, at the thought that he had not only escaped himself, but had been the means of rescuing the beautiful Adrian Woodland, who now looked up in his face,

smiled, and thanked him for the interest he had shown in her welfare.

"Well, we are so far upon our journey," added Brandon, speaking as if he had fully resolved upon bearing the lady company until she was freed from her present dilemma. She looked up at him in surprise.

"Do you accompany me?"

"If it is your wish I will leave you at once," he replied instantaneously, touched at the abruptness of the question.

"You do not know where I go."

"No; nor do I know where I am, or what is to become of me, nor do I care so long as I can be with you."

She looked at him with a soulful expression, as if she would read his heart, while the face of young Havens glowed with the new emotion which had taken possession of his being.

It was plain that some great grief weighed her down, which she was unwilling to communicate to him, although her actions and manner seemed to say that she was debating with herself whether to do so or not.

Hoping that she would decide favorably, the hunter determined to press his thoughts home upon her, and then give her time to form her own conclusions regarding him.

"Lady," he said, "I need not tell you that the mystery which surrounds you is entirely impenetrable to me. I know your name, but nothing as to your history, or how it is that you were found alone in an Indian canoe, floating down the river. Whether you have friends, whether you are a captive among the Indians, who have drifted unconsciously away from them, or whether, by some strange accident, you have been borne away from your home, is more than I can tell. This secret is with you. I have no desire to penetrate it. You know a little and perhaps care less for me; but allow me to say that I am from the state of Illinois, where I am comfortably situated, with the tenderest of family ties, and that with some friends, I have ventured this far west on a hunting-expedition. You and I have been together for a short time, but the hour or two has been long enough for me to admire, respect, and to love you, with the whole depth of my nature!"

This was "rushing things," certainly, but something seemed to tell Brandon Havens that time was precious. An impending

sense of evil already pressed him down, and, as he looked upon the wonderfully-beautiful face of the woman before him, it was with the feeling that makes us tremble for the possession of the prize that is surely slipping from our grasp.

"I will leave you here," he added, after a moment's pause, "while I go to the top of the hill yonder, and see whether I can gain an idea of our situation, and which is the course to pursue to reach some settlement."

With this parting, Havens moved hastily away, toward a wooded hill, about a couple of hundred yards distant. The intervening wood was thickly grown with brush, so that he experienced a little difficulty in reaching the summit.

He was well rewarded for his trouble, however, for he gained a view extending over a dozen miles in area. The course of the enormously-swollen river could be traced for a long distance, until, like the sea, it seemed to mingle with the horizon.

Not a sign of a steamer was visible upon it—a fact which perhaps impressed the young hunter more deeply than any thing else with a sense of his loneliness, and utter removal from the confines of civilization.

But toward the north, the country was entirely open, that is, free from water, although the vast extent of forest reminded him of its wild and unsettled condition.

Perhaps a mile to the north, he discerned the column-like smoke of a camp-fire, ascending through the tree-tops. While in all probability these were Indians, still the young man had strong hopes that the smoke marked the camp-fire of his friends, who had followed this route in their search for him.

This was the only sign of life that greeted his vision. Everywhere else was solitude, loneliness and desolation.

Carried by the resistless force of the current, Havens had been swept many miles out of his course, and there was a long and perilous tramp before him ere he could expect to extricate himself from the labyrinth of danger into which he had been drawn.

Then, too, the care of the beautiful Adrian Woodland made his task assume almost the proportions of that of Hercules—although all the more enchanting on that account.

In quite buoyant spirits, he descended the hill, and again

picked his way through the undergrowth until he reached the river again.

Here a terrible disappointment awaited him. Upon reaching the spot where the boat was left, it was gone, as was also the fair unknown, and poor Wolf lay pinned to the earth with an arrow—the still warm blood oozing from the wound. An Indian alone could have done this.

It was some minutes before Havens realized that she had really disappeared. He looked up and down the stream but neither the boat nor she who had occupied it was visible.

An overwhelming sadness was upon the heart of young Havens, the hunter. His whole soul seemed to have gone out toward the beautiful creature, whom he had met so short a time before.

Attracted not only by her grace of form and manner, but by what he deemed her sweetness of disposition, and the unquestionable culture that was displayed in her conversation—he had already begun drawing, roseate pictures of the future, in which, as may be supposed, she formed the principal figure.

As he had stood on the hill-top, gazing off in the distance, her fairy-like form floated in the air before him, and she seemed to beckon to him from the distant sky—

But it was gone! She had departed like a vision of the sleep, and nothing but her memory remained behind.

Minute after minute passed away, and the shades of night began gathering over the wood and river, and still Brandon Havens sat watching and waiting in vain.

He had called her name again and again, but no response came, and with a sad and weary heart he shouldered his rifle, and plunged into the forest.

And, as he did so, another form, that of a crouching Indian, noiselessly emerged from the darkness of the wood, and as noiselessly followed him into the gloom.

CHAPTER III.

KYLE, THE SCOUT.

AT the close of the same day that saw Brandon Havens plunge disconsolately into the woods, so closely followed by the form of the crouching Indian, two men were gathered around a camp-fire, which had been kindled in a deep hollow of the forest, at a point about ten miles distant.

Both were young and rather prepossessing in appearance, and they were the two men with whom our hero had been hunting before we introduced him to our readers.

They were brothers, Edward and George Gaskill, the first being several years the senior of the other, and in every way his superior so far as concerned hunting and their knowledge of woodcraft.

"Well, Havens has made a miss of it," remarked the younger, who was busy broiling a piece of venison over the fire:

"Yes; he has gone and lost himself, and instead of hunting for game, we have got to spend the time in hunting for him."

"He must do the most of that himself, as he has Wolf with him."

"It is too bad that he wandered off so far, for it is not only difficult but dangerous for us to attempt to find him again."

"What do you mean?" asked George, looking inquiringly toward his brother.

"You remember that old hunter, Hugh Kyle, who used to stop so frequently at our house, and who had the weakness of spending six months' earnings in about as many hours at the village tavern?"

"I rather guess I do," was the response. "He it was who furnished us with whatever knowledge of hunting we possess."

"Well, we are on his hunting-grounds, and, as near as I can judge, in the most dangerous part of them."

"Why so?"

"Don't you recall that he said the most devilish portion of the Delaware Indians were to be found just across the Rattlesnake river, on the western shore?—and I think that is where we are."

"It is hard to tell, when the streams are so swollen out of shape by the freshet."

"I know it is, and I only strongly suspect that we are in that section, where he used to locate his most thrilling encounters."

"If that is the case, we are in as much danger as Havens is."

"True; and that makes me wish he would turn up and get out of this dangerous section."

"You remember it was my opinion that we were going too far altogether, and I said as much yesterday morning."

"I know, I know," returned the elder brother, showing by his voice and manner that he was very uneasy and apprehensive, "but it can't be helped now; we must make the best of it. 'Sh!"

Both held their breath, and listened for a moment, but all was still.

"What was it?" asked George, in the suppressed voice of fear.

"It sounded like the breaking of a twig, under the tread of some one."

"We couldn't be better situated for an enemy to steal upon us than we are."

"I was about—"

Further utterance was checked by the spiteful crack of a rifle, and the ping of the bullet was heard as it sped by the face of Edward Gaskill.

The brothers sprung to their feet, caught up their guns, and plunged into the woods.

At the same moment a clear, ringing laugh was heard, followed by the exclamation:

"Wal thur! Beavers and bufflers! Ef that's the way one gun makes you jump, you ought to have about forty red-skins

swarming about your ears, and then you'd dance like a bear on a hot Johnnycake."

The words were followed by the figure of a man, who, as he strode out of the darkness into the light of the camp-fire, revealed a form of enormous proportions, dressed in the costume of an Indian, and carrying a rifle of still greater longitude than himself.

A close fitting coon-skin hat was upon his head, and his face was covered with an enormous grizzled beard, that reached down to his waist.

As he strode up and stopped by the fire he was still shaking from laughter, at the consternation that his rifle-shot had created.

The brothers, who were crouching side by side in the wood, and staring at the apparition by the fire, looked for a moment in silence, and then the elder exclaimed :

"That is some crazy person."

"Yes; and more dangerous than—"

"Hello! Hugh Kyle, as sure as I live!" interrupted the elder, as he rose to his feet and strode toward the figure by the camp-fire.

When he reached it he held out his hand, but the grizzled old hunter, instead of accepting the proffered salutation, looked quietly at him and then laughed more heartily than before.

"Did ye ever git skeert at the noise of a gun?" he asked.

"Haven't you?" responded Gaskill, with the direct question.

"Wal, I s'pose so," was the reply, as he took the hand and gave it the grip of a vise.

"Whar's t'other chap, and what are yer both doin' in this outlandish country?"

George came forward as he heard his name pronounced, and there followed quite a boisterous greeting. It was many months since the old hunter had been seen by the brothers, and they were glad enough to meet him.

But a few moments were required for the young men to explain the cause of their being in this part of the world, and the mishap that had befallen Brandon Havens, in losing himself in the woods.

"Jes' like him!" exclaimed Kyle, who seemed in a chronic state of mirth. "I used to take that feller inter the woods when he was a youngster, and he was allers runnin' his neck inter danger. Howsumever, I'll hunt him up far yer in the morning."

"Hugh," said Edward, "we are not exactly certain of our location. Is it true that we are on the western bank of Rattlesnake river?"

"That's jest exactly whar ye be. How did you cross?"

"We came across a friendly Indian, who paddled us over for a pocket-knife I gave him."

"War thar any thing quar in the gineral appearance of that copper gentleman?" inquired the old hunter, in a significant voice.

"I recollect that his nose had a peculiar look, as though it had been split years ago, by some blunt instrument, and had never received skillful treatment before healing up, so that it made him look very repulsive."

"Twenty years ago that copper-skin had his nose split by a tomahawk, and it was in my hands when it was done."

"Ah! did you have a fight with him?"

"That's jest what I did. I was summat younger then than I am now, and so was he, and I fell into the hands of the Delawares, all because I war about as big a fool as you two chaps (and that's sayin' a mighty deal), and this yer old dog made me run the gantlet. He stood at the fur end, and I could see from the way he looked, when he found I war gittin' by the others, that he meant to kill me. So I war on the look-out, and I gin a dodge, and then butted him in the belly, afore he knowed what war comin', and then, so that he might remember me, I jerked his tomahawk out of his hand, and gave him a belt that split open his nose. Then you'd better b'lieve I used my legs, with the whole caboodle yelping arter me, and it was the biggest run of my life to git away from 'em. Ever arter that, this skunk has been knowed as Cut Nose of the Delawares."

"He seems to be very friendly disposed toward our people at present."

This remark upon the part of George Gaskill caused another explosion of laughter from the hunter, although, like

the famous Leatherstocking, it was a hearty laugh of silence.

"Thar ain't a bigger red-skin devil on t'other side of Massip than Cut Nose. All the hunters and traders know him, and are more afriad of him than any other dozen that live."

"Is it possible?" was the amazed query of the elder Gas-kill. "Why did he treat us so courteously?"

"He brought yer across the river to make *sure of yer*. That ar' skunk knows whar yer went, and whar yer camped, and he's had his eye on yer ever since, and ef you'd laid down to sleep you'd never opened yer eyes ag'in; but to-morrow he'd pull out yer scalps danglin' at his waist, and would been dancing among the lodges of the Delawares, and tellin' his folks what a great brave war Cut Nose."

Unbounded was the amazement of the brothers at hearing this, and for a few seconds they did not speak, but looked at the old hunter as if they were digesting the startling words he had uttered. Then the elder said :

"We suspected that we were in dangerous territory. Were we wrong?"

"Yer can tramp a thousand miles and not find a spot that can begin with this. Hyar's the best place fur deer and b'ar, and hyar the red-skins come down as thick as flies in August."

"We have seen nothing of them—none at all, but Cut Nose who brought us over."

"This hyar fresh is such a tearin' big one, that it's got up among the lodges, and that's what's the matter with 'em."

"Where is their village?"

"A half dozen miles down the river, on this same side; then thar's another jist above us."

"So that we are between two fires," remarked George.

"That's it; and while it's dark, you'd better do yer best to git out of it."

"Shall we get Cut Nose to paddle us back?" laughed the elder brother.

"I've got a little boat pulled under the bank, and I'll put you on t'other side, which must be about three miles, the way the river is now running, and it spreads out more and more the further you git down stream, till it's a reg'lar sea."

"And after we get across the stream?"

"Make tracks fur home, and don't come a-huntin' out hyar ag'in, till I can take yer in tow."

"But what will become of Havens?"

"I will hunt him up."

"We do not wish to return without him."

"Yer needn't if yer don't want. I'll git yer to a place by daylight whar yer kin hunt fur a week without the reds botherin' yer; but it won't do fur yer to stay hyar."

"Would we not be safe in your company?" asked Edward, who was not exactly suited with the proposition of the hunter.

"Ef it war any other time, I'd like to take yer in tow, but I've got a little too big bus'ness on my hands jist now."

"What is it?" asked the younger brother, speaking before he was aware of the impertinence of his query.

"Wal, I s'pose that's no hurt in tellin' yer," was the hesitating reply. "Thar's a gal been missin' from one of the settlements in Illinois fur two or three years, and I've been huntin' fur her fur a year past."

"Have you gained any clue?"

"I tramped over five hundred miles before I farned any thing more nor her name, which I had when I started, and which is Adrian Woodland. Did either of yer ever hear of her?"

Both replied in the negative.

"She belongs to a big family in Illinois, and was stole, when she war on a visit to some of her friends. From what I farned I s'posed that some of the Sioux up in the northwest had her, and I've been ranging through thar huntin'-grounds arter her, and hev jist got back in time to fin' it war these infarnal Delawares that nabbed her, and what's more I b'lieve the skunk of a Cut Nose war the very chap that had her doin' of it, and he's got her down in the village, or hid away, the Old Boy only knows whar."

"You are engaged on quite a romantic business," said the younger brother, who was not a little interested in the story of the old hunter.

"Yas; I s'pose so. Her family, as I war sayin', is a big one, and her folks ar' half crazy over thar loss. They've offered a big pile of money fur any one who will bring her

back, and they've already paid me a heap for what I've tried to do."

"You have hopes of succeeding?"

"Yes," replied Kyle, in a doubting manner, as if there were grave apprehensions in his mind upon more than one point; "but that's one or two things about the matter that looks bad. And the fust is that that's an infernal white man mixed up in it, a renegade of a scamp, named Zeke Quigley."

"How came he in it?"

"He consorts with these red-skins, and used to love the gal years ago, afore he had to leave his own people for hoss-stealin'. I knowed he'd gone off and jined the Injins, but it's powerful quar that I never found out he war among the Delawares till a few weeks ago, and then I knowed jist how the thing come about. He was too blamed cowardly to risk his neck in catchin' the gal himself, so he got Cut Nose to steal her for him. And now, Quigley and Cut Nose have both got to settle with me fur it."

This was uttered with a vim and emphasis which showed how deep was the earnestness of the old hunter. His small gray eyes seemed to scintillate fire, and he grasped the rifle-barrel, as if he would crush the iron with his terrible power.

"Can we not be of any assistance to you?" inquired the elder brother.

"Not while yer on this side of the Rattlesnake," was the reply. "Yer will only get yerselves into trouble, and I'd only hev to help *yer* out besides the gal. I'll stow *yer* away in good pasture, whar *yer* can wait till my arrival, and then we'll make the homeward tramp together."

"Well, Hugh, if there is any danger from Cut Nose and his friends coming down on us, we had better be on the move!"

"What I opine exactly. So, come along and we'll eat the meat on the way."

Only a few minutes were necessary for preparation, when the three men, under the leadership of the old grizzled hunter, started for Rattlesnake river.

CHAPTER IV.

A PERILOUS CROSSING OF A RIVER.

THE night was cloudy and dark. There was no moon; and in the gloom of the forest it was the most that the brothers could do to keep near their guide.

More than once they could touch him, and yet they failed to distinguish his form. He walked rapidly, and yet with a noiseless motion that would have carried him over the sleeping form of the red Indian, as the shadow of a cloud passing before the moon.

Again and again the two men paused bewildered, and were only enlightened by the cautious "'sh!'" of the old hunter, who seemed to act as if he were threading his way through an enemy's camp.

When they came out of the woods and stood on the edge of the vast lagoon of water, it was found that a faint moonlight penetrated through the misty air, and a partial view of the immense mass of rushing water could be obtained.

The three men stood silent and listening, while they carefully looked about in every direction. Nothing but the solemn ocean-like roar of the enormous volume of water reached their ears.

But while they were thus standing motionless, the guide suddenly exclaimed in his cautious undertone:

"Hark!"

For a moment nothing unusual reached their ears, and then, at the same instant, the brothers distinguished a peculiar dipping and washing, such as would naturally be made by the swift sweep of Indian paddles.

"Stoop down, and see what you can see!" added Kyle, doing as he advised the others to do.

Crouching down in this manner, the three men watched and listened. The regular sound of the paddles was heard with such growing distinctness, that for a time, it looked as if the boat were coming to shore at their very feet.

Suddenly, in the gloom, the brothers discovered the dark form of an Indian canoe, sweeping diagonally down the current, with the speed of a racehorse. So swiftly indeed did it pass, that it shot across their field of vision like a meteor, and was almost instantly swallowed up in the great world of darkness that inclosed them all.

"There be red-skins all about us," said Kyle, a moment after the disappearance of the large boat. "They're on the river, and in the woods behind us."

"Where is Cut Nose?"

"He is somewhere not far off, and like enough has followed us."

"He's a pretty smart Indian, if he could keep sight of us, on such a night as this in the woods."

"The river is falling," added the old hunter, as he stooped down to pick up his canoe. "Do you see that? When I came here a few hours ago, the starn was jist in the water, and now that's a good six feet atween 'em."

The delicate structure was carried to the edge of the river, and launched, and seizing the paddle, Hugh Kyle struck boldly out into the surging waters.

He was one of the few masters of the art of managing a canoe, sitting as motionless as a statue, while each powerful sweep of his long arms, sent it forward with such an impetus, that it seemed to the brothers as if it would be jerked from beneath them.

They had progressed several hundred yards in this manner, and had narrowly escaped collision with numerous floating trees, when Edward Gaskill was somewhat alarmed at the sight of several points of fire which seemed to be floating upon the water. Touching the arm of his guide, he called his attention to it. The latter turned his head, and then muttered in the low voice of cautious vexation:

"Thunder! Inj'ns ag'in?"

Dipping his paddle with greater care in the water, he sent the canoe backward, so as to avoid, if possible, any closer approach of the hostile boat.

"Do you see them specks of light, like stars afloat on the water? Wal, the warmints ar' smokin' thar blamed calumets, and that's the light of 'em that you see. B'ars and beavers!"

what a nice job it would be for me to smash some of them 'ere pipes, and thar heads at the same time."

"I wouldn't undertake it," whispered George.

"Oh, you needn't be afeard of that. I ain't such a big fool; but—'sh! they're comin' this way—no, they ain't, they're goin' by."

Gradually the singular-looking points of light drifted further down-stream; and the party were just beginning to feel pleased, when a curious whoop, three times repeated, was heard from the shore behind them.

"What is the meaning of that?" inquired George, of their guide.

"I know *that* voice," replied the latter. "No one could make such an infarnal noise except that skunk of a Cut Nose."

"What is it intended for?"

"A signal to those varmints in the boat. Don't you see they've stopped paddling?"

The specks of fire which at first attracted their attention could now be seen motionless upon the water, showing that the canoe was stationary, its progress probably checked by that curious signal which had come from Cut Nose.

For perhaps a minute the canoe held this motionless position, when precisely the same cry that Cut Nose had made was sent back to him from the greater canoe.

This was proof that the two parties were in communication, and understood each other, and it looked very much as if the anxiously-listening whites were the cause and subject of this interchange of signals.

The situation of our friends was becoming more dangerous each moment, and Kyle felt the necessity of placing a greater distance between himself and the Delawares, who seemed to have gained some inkling of the true state of the case.

The large canoe still remained stationary, while in spite of the hunter's cautious efforts, his own boat kept drifting slowly downward.

Whispering to his companions to remain perfectly quiescent, he began stealthily working the canoe across the stream.

At this juncture, the glowing points of light disappeared

as suddenly as if they had sunk beneath the surface of the water.

Kyle noticed this and it gave him greater uneasiness than any thing that had yet happened, for it showed that the Delawares had become aware of his proximity, and had taken this precaution to conceal their own locality.

There was a manifest disadvantage against the white men. There were three of them in the canoe, and only one paddle between them, while every red-skin was furnished with his own oar, and knew how to use it.

Should it come to a trial of speed, there seemed no earthly grounds for the weaker party to entertain a hope of escaping, and the anxiety of the hunter to avoid such a *dernier resort* will be readily understood.

Still dallying, as a fish is sometimes seen to toy with its fins, while all the time it moves not, Kyle gradually worked the boat away from the dangerous neighborhood.

All the time, his keen eyes were glancing around in the darkness, on the look-out for the reappearance of the long, dark hull of the Indian canoe, which as yet remained invisible to his perception.

Neither of the brothers spoke, for they were fully sensible of their perilous situation. They hardly dared to turn their heads lest the movement might attract attention, or help to retard the motion of the canoe, already too heavily laden.

Ten minutes or more had passed in this state of suspense, and Kyle was still toiling at his paddle, when he suddenly ceased work and exclaimed in a husky whisper:

"Down! thar they comes!"

CHAPTER V.

ENCOMPASSED BY PERIL.

THE startling command of the hunter was instantly obeyed, and the brothers ducked their heads below the gunwales of the canoe, and with rapidly-beating hearts waited and listened.

At the moment he spoke, Kyle had caught the shadowy outlines of the Indian canoe, spiked with its load of fiendish red-skins, and his suspicion took the form of certainty, and he saw that longer concealment was impossible.

Still, comprehending the desperate nature of a resort to flight, he attempted stratagem.

He was partly dressed as an Indian, and in the darkness he hoped to pass as one. A quarter of a century spent in wandering in the wilds of the north-west, had given him an intimate knowledge of Indian "ways and means," and he was well-acquainted with the idioms of the Delaware tongue.

Treating the appearance of the red-skins, therefore, as a matter of course, he called out to them, in as clear enunciation as any of them were capable of uttering :

"My brothers have wandered far from their homes this evening."

"Does our brother go alone in the darkness of the night?" instantly came back to him in the same tongue.

"Manitou is angry ; the water is upon the land, and many of the lodges are borne away."

"Where is the home of my brother?"

"It is gone with the waters that have swept away his squaw and papoose."

"Who is my brother?"

"Owal-you, who dwells by the great trees, where the river has never come before."

This was an admirable answer. Owal-you was the real name of a Delaware warrior, who, as Kyle well knew, dwelt several miles up the river, in a grove of large white oak.

The hunter had met this hermit-like Indian more than once, and imitated his voice and manner of speech to perfection.

He was literally a neutral savage, who took no part in the wars of his brethren among each other or with the hunters and settlers who penetrated into their country.

Like all of the hunter's stratagems, it had been adopted on the spur of the moment, and yet, had he taken hours to conjure up an artifice for the present occasion, he could not have hit upon a more happy one, or one that answered his purpose better.

"Has the squaw of my brother been swallowed up by the waters of the great Manitou?"

"Owal-you has no squaw nor papoose. He walks the earth alone."

All this time, the larger canoe was edging toward the smaller, while Kyle was as cautiously endeavoring to creep away from such a dangerous locality.

It was evident that while the hunter had succeeded in a great measure, yet he had not done so perfectly. There still remained a suspicion upon the part of the Delawares that all was not right—a suspicion which would have been entirely dissipated, but for the signal of Cut Nose, which at this moment came again across the water, as if he were impatient that no favorable response had been made to his previous calls to them.

"Why does my brother keep so far away from the Delaware warriors? Have evil birds sung in his ears?"

"Owal-you folds his arms and sits alone in his great sorrow! Do my brothers wish to disturb him?"

This was another master stroke and it almost succeeded. The grief of an Indian is sacred, and his brother-warriors have no right to intrude upon it.

Kyle had removed his coon skin cap, before the Delawares were in sight, and with his long hair streaming over his shoulders, there was little fear of the deception being detected so long as quite a respectable distance was maintained between the two boats.

In his perfect comprehension of the Indian character, Kyle now did what Owl-you himself would have done, had he been situated as represented.

With the air of a man whose rights and dignity have been invaded, he took up the paddle, and with slow, solemn strokes, began working his boat up and across the river.

The Delawares maintained their stationary position, not daring to follow.

And here all trouble and danger would have ended, but for that marplot Cut Nose, who, at this moment, sent a different whoop or cry across the water, which produced its instant effect upon his friends.

This vicious red-skin had undoubtedly witnessed the departure of the whites in the canoe, and suspected some attempt at a trick upon the part of the hunter, whom, as we have shown, he had good cause to hold in respectful remembrance.

The system of Indian signaling is one of the most curious characteristics of a strange people; and, while he gave utterance only to a few simple sounds, they seemed to explain to the Delawares the deception that was being attempted upon them.

The large canoe instantly shot forward in pursuit of the smaller; but sufficient time had elapsed for Kyle to screen himself entirely in the darkness, and provided he could deceive his pursuers as to the direction he was taking, there was a good prospect of his maintaining his invisibility.

Accordingly he turned directly toward the shore he had left and plied his paddle with all the power and skill he possessed, hoping and praying that the Delawares would continue their course toward the eastern bank.

But experienced and skillful as was the hunter, he committed a fatal blunder, in that he betrayed himself by a slight noise, made by accidentally striking his paddle against the side of the canoe.

This insignificant noise gave the clue the Delawares needed and they headed straight toward the laboring boat, with tremendous speed.

All seemed dark for our friends, when an unlooked-for diversion occurred—a circumstance which would have caused an ordinary person to have yielded what now appeared a fruitless contest in despair, but which the matchless cleverness of Hugh Kyle enabled him to turn to his own advantage in a manner which certainly deserved admiration.

While he was glancing furtively behind him in quest of his pursuers, and ahead to see where he was going, he suddenly discerned a second canoe, with a single occupant, coming down-stream, and almost in a line with himself.

Kyle headed directly toward it, and the two swiftly approached. As they did so he saw that the stranger was an Indian, who doubtless surveyed him with considerable wonder, but had no suspicion of his identity.

The two passed almost close enough for their canoes to graze each other. In that brief hurrying space of time, if the solitary red-skin recognized the white man, it was with a feeling of relief that he saw him shoot above into the darkness, and rapidly disappear.

Kyle kept his eye upon the vanishing boat, until it was swallowed up in the darkness, when for the second time, he turned the prow of his canoe toward the eastern bank, and plied his paddle with utmost power and skill.

What was expected and intended to take place, now followed this stratagem.

While the Deawares were paddling rapidly forward, in the direction of the slight sound, which their ears had caught, they suddenly discovered a boat with a single Indian in it, bearing rapidly down upon them.

Running their own canoe across its path, they speedily intercepted it, and the two came together.

Here several volleys of questions were exchanged, and some ten minutes were passed before the pursuing party were enabled to comprehend the curious mistake that had been made; but they got it through their heads at last, saw how it all had come about, and then attempted to retrieve their error.

These were golden moments to Kyle, and he improved them to the utmost. No sound betrayed the progress of his boat, and yet it glided like an arrow across the turbid waters.

He had gone but a short distance, when a vexatious annoyance was caused by his entrance into a mass of floating trees, logs and stumps. The even-tempered hunter almost lost his self-control from the difficulty and delay of extricating himself, and before he could do so, he was carried a considerable distance down-stream.

But he succeeded at last, and found himself free again, and

onward he sped through the sheltering darkness toward the friendly eastern shore.

"If yer feel like it," said he, addressing the brothers in the bottom of the boat, "you can raise yer heads."

"Is the danger past?" asked George, looking alarmedly around in the gloom.

"I rather think it is," was the reply, "unless some other informal canoe comes tearing down on top of us."

But nothing farther was seen of their enemies, and a few minutes after, the dark outline of the wooded shore was distinguished, and Kyle drove the canoe like a wedge into the soft bank, and the three sprung out.

"Do you know where you are?" asked George, who was never more completely lost in his life.

"When you've tramped these woods as often as I have, you won't get lost, if it is as dark as a wolf's mouth."

"Isn't there danger of the Delawares following us even here?"

"Not much, unless it mought be they had sharper eyes than any red-skin was ever known to have, and can see a mile through this darkness."

"But won't they find your canoe here in the morning?"

"Not very well," replied Kyle, with a laugh, "being as how I'm goin' to take it away with me."

With which he shouldered the delicate structure, and started into the woods, closely followed by the brothers, who, as may well be supposed, looked with greater admiration than ever upon his skill.

The ground over which they traveled was found to be quite swampy, and the walking was necessarily very tiresome; but, after a time, they succeeded in reaching comparatively dry ground, where matters were more pleasant.

Over a mile was passed in this manner, when they descended into a sort of ravine, where were numerous large rocks. In among these Kyle led the way until they reached a sort of cavern, where the final halt was made, and the canoe placed upon the ground.

A fire was speedily started and by its cheerful blaze, all three soon warmed and dried themselves, and made themselves as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances.

"In the mornin' I leave yer hyar," said the hunter, "and yer can make it yer head-quarters as long as yer choose to do so."

And at the earliest dawn of light, he left them there.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RENEGADE.

HAVING progressed thus far with our story, it becomes necessary for us to go back for a time, to take a view at some incidents that may be supposed to have transpired, something over a year previous to those already narrated.

At the time of which we write the upper part of Illinois was the north-western frontier, and those who dwelt there were subject to the usual danger from the attacks and incursions of the Indians, and many of them suffered severely from this cause.

The wealthiest settler, in the section to which we refer, was Colonel Gustavus Woodland, who had been an officer in the war of 1812, and whose family consisted of himself and wife, and a single daughter, Adrian—a girl whose charms and grace of person and manner, won for her the admiration of all with whom she came in contact.

Suitors she had without number, but as yet her heart was untouched, and her only wish seemed to be that she might command the love and affection of her parents, in which it is scarcely necessary to say she succeeded.

Zeke Quigley, to whom casual reference has been made, was a man who had been in the employ of Colonel Woodland, but whose vicious habits were such that he was sent away about a year previous to the time of which we are now speaking.

Before going, however, he had persecuted Adrian so persistently with his attentions that she was compelled to appeal to her father for protection.

The soldier was so incensed at this impudent intrusion,

that he gave Quigley a thorough thrashing, and he went off muttering all sorts of revenge, which Woodland forgot almost the moment he was out of sight.

For a long time, Adrian was careful of exposing herself to the least danger of meeting this evil man, who, she believed, was lurking somewhere in the vicinity.

But as week after week, and month after month passed and she saw nothing of him, she began to lose the shuddering apprehension which had once taken possession of her, and in time she almost forgot that such a being existed, until she was reminded of it, in a manner which she was certain to carry with her to her dying day.

It was at the close of a mild summer day, that Adrian was walking along the shore of the Illinois river, which flowed by their house at a distance of a hundred yards. The air was still, and she was in one of those deep reveries to which young persons of an imaginative disposition are subject, when her attention was arrested by a rippling of the water near her, and turning her head, she saw a small canoe, that had just touched the bank, while its occupant was in the act of leaping out.

One glance was sufficient for her to recognize her detested enemy, Zeke Quigley.

Turning instantly about, she started homeward, but the next moment he was at her side.

"Hold on a minute; don't be in such a blamed hurry!" he called out.

She was on the point of uttering a scream to her father; but a sudden fear restrained. No doubt the villain had come prepared for such a contingency and would shoot down the officer on sight.

So for the sake of her father, she repressed her fears, and turned her pale, beautiful face toward the intruder, with the question:

"What do you want?"

"I want to talk with yer; I've been on the look-out fur yer fur the last three, four days. I don't s'pose you expected to see me."

"I certainly did not."

"Nor wa'n't very anxious to see me, ho! ho!"

"I can not say that I was.

"Wal, I don't know as it makes any pertickler difference, as I can't help it."

"Please tell me what your business is with me?"

Quigley turned his head to make sure that he was not seen; but the high bank which intervened between the beach where they stood, effectually shut out all observation, where the person was not directly on the edge of the bank itself.

They were entirely alone.

"Yer know, Adrian," began Quigley, looking her earnestly in the face, and assuming as sentimental a voice as was possible, "that I love yer."

Here he paused, and she simply said:

"Well?"

"Yer found that out a year ago; but yer father didn't like it. He stopped it—"

"You are wrong there; it was *I* who didn't like it, and *I* who stopped it. I requested father to end the annoyance and I thought he had."

"It don't make no difference; we won't quarrel about it. What I wanted to get at, was that I loved yer like the blazes; but, when I became really sartin that it didn't please yer, I made up my mind to act like a man and not to bother yer ag'in."

"You were sensible then and I regret that you forgot your decision."

"I war goin' to tell yer the reason why I forgot it. I thought I could do it, but found it was impossible. I dreamed about yer when I war asleep or awake, and made such a fool of myself that the Delawares all noticed it—"

"What do you mean?" she suddenly asked, turning sharply upon him, before he was given time to finish the last remark.

Quigley had unwittingly betrayed himself. That which he had intended should remain a secret, had come out before he had time to check it.

He stammered, blushed and acted so confusedly that the suspicion of Adrian was turned into positive proof. She read the truth.

"So you have gone to live with the Indians, have you?"

Zeke saw that he was detected and it was useless to attempt concealment longer. So he put a bold face on the matter.

"I war jest goin' to tell yer that. Yes, I have been livin' with the Delaware Injuns far nigh onto a year past."

"I supposed your tastes would be congenial."

"Wal, they've treated me a blamed sight better than the white folks ever done," was the sullen reply. "If my own people had acted so, I never would have left them."

"Whose fault was it that you did so?"

"It wasn't *mine*," was the fierce reply, as he scowled savagely at her.

Adrian saw that it was foolish to bandy words with such a character; so she maintained silence for a moment, and then in a quiet, dignified way, remarked:

"If you are through with me, I will return home."

At the same time, she made a movement, as if to go, but he rudely clutched her arm.

She turned calmly toward him, but she quailed at the evil glitter of his eye.

"Be quick and say what you wish, for father will soon miss me, and may come here for me."

"Let him come," muttered Quigley, in such a malignant, vindictive undertone, that a shudder of terror passed over her frame.

"Let him come, I say; him and me have got to settle matters yit, atween us."

"Is that what you desired to say?"

"No; I war tellin' yer that I loved yer, and allers will love yer, but I can't help it, and I want yer to promise me that you'll return that love."

This was the *ts* bluntness of impudence, and Adrian for the time was at a loss as to how she should treat him.

"Is that *all*?"

"Yer's trailer's cracky with yer questions, afore a fellow has time to git b'longed. I tell yer I'm a chief among the Delawares; I kin do just as I please and I have every thing my own way. If ye'll go with me, ye'll be queen, and have every thing in better style than yer *ever* dreamed of."

"This is all lost time," replied Adrian, who was beginning

to feel anxious to get out of the man's company. "There is not any inducement in the world that you could offer that would tempt me to leave my home, and go into the wilderness. I would do it for no living creature that walks the earth."

This was decisive language and would have satisfied any reasonable person; but lovers are the least rational beings in the world, especially such selfish ones as Zeke Quigley.

"Yer don't know what yer' refusin'," he continued. "I'll be the greatest person livin'; as great as King George of England; and then if yer don't want to live among the Injuns, yer needn't do it—"

"I know that very well," was the appropriate interruption.

"I'll have the finest kind of lodge yer ever heerd tell on built for yer, and thar we kin live by ourselves, and if yer say so, I won't have an Injun come near yer."

He paused, and with a quiet smile she asked:

"Are you through?"

The reply was given as a man gives an irresistible argument.

"I s'pose that the great objection that a gal has to gittin' married to a feller that she loves, is 'cause she don't want to go away from home. That's what's the matter with yer; but we kin fix even *that*. It ain't so fur out to Iowa, but that I'll bring yer home once a year, to see yer folks."

Quigley was earnest and excited in his manner, and as he talked kept edging toward the canoe. Unconsciously to herself she walked with slow, short steps in the same direction, until only a few feet separated her from the boat.

Suddenly she observed the startling fact, and drew back.

"There is no need of continuing this conversation," said she, "for no good can come of it. Father will soon be here, and I advise you to depart while there is peace between you."

"What do I care for *him*?" was the savage reply. "If yer go with me, I will bury the hatchet between us, but if he stops me ag'in, it will be the last time."

"Why do you lay the blame on him?" demanded Adrian, her eyes flashing with indignation. "It is not he that refuses you. It is *I*, and *I* am the one to answer for it."

"Ye're mad," grinned the renegade. "Ye'll be sorry for them words some time."

"Never!" was the emphatic response.

"Yer see, here is my canoe. All ye've got to do, is to step in it, and I'll paddle yer all night, and never stop till I git yer in yer own lodge, where you'll be Queen of the Woods."

"I'll have nothing more to say to you. Go and never cross my path again."

She turned, but he intercepted her with a drawn knife in his hand.

"Ye've got to go with me," he said, between his clenched teeth. "If yer make any noise I'll kill yer. So, jist be docile and step into the boat."

As she never would have done this, he doubtless would have laid violent hands on her, had not, at this critical moment, a new actor appeared upon the scene.

CHAPTER VII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

It was at this critical moment, that the huge negro servant of Colonel Woodland, Cæsar by name, made his appearance on top of the bank, and looked down upon the speakers.

Adrian looked upon his homely black form, as if he were an angel, while the renegade ground his teeth with rage.

"Hallo, Miss Adri'n?" called out Cæsar. "Dar's whar yer ar' be yer? De cunnel sent me to look fur yer and I fough't you war here or somewhar else. Who dat scallawag dar'wid yer?"

The African scanned the man for a moment, and then recognized him.

"Oh, de gerry gracious heten! ef dar ain't dat hoss-t'ief, Zeke Quigley, pokin' 'round here ag'in. Hello! Cunnel Woodland! come here quick! here he am! hurry up or he'll git away!"

When we state that this was uttered at the top of his voice, and in tones which could be heard for fully a mile, while Cæsar, all the time, kept leaping up and down and gesticulating furiously—when we state this, we say it will be readily comprehended that there was good cause for fright upon the part of Zeke Quigley.

The renegade was cowardly, and he saw his imminent danger. All thoughts of the abduction of Adrian Woodland were lost in the one wild desire to secure his own personal safety, and with a muttered curse, he wheeled around, shoved his canoe hastily into the water, sprung into it, and began desperately rowing down-stream.

He had scarcely reached the middle of the river, when Colonel Woodland, who had comprehended the cause of his servant's excitement, dashed down the bank, leaped into one of the canoes that was always moored there, and started in pursuit.

Almost at the same moment, another settler by the name of Britton, pushed out from the opposite shore, and joined in the chase, although he had no suspicion of the identity of the fugitive.

It really seemed as if the fates were against the renegade, for while he was plying his paddle with a skill which sent his canoe spinning like a swallow over the water, and which gave him good reason to hope that he would distance his pursuers, a third man joined in the pursuit.

This individual came upon the scene from the most dangerous point; that is, he was farther down-stream and started from the opposite shore.

The third person was quite a woodman, named Burton, who was the most skillful oarsman of the entire party, and who had heard and comprehended the excited words of Cæsar, so that he had the impetus of knowing what he was after.

The singular manner in which the chase now developed itself, was to put the fugitive in the center of a large triangle, with his pursuers each at a distant corner, the most disadvantageous disposition possible.

It was beginning to grow dark, the sun having set, but blank night was too far away, and the situation of the rene-

gade was too desperate, for him to hope any thing from that fact.

Colonel Woodland was determined on shooting the villain, the moment he was nigh enough to make sure of his aim, and he paddled with unceasing energy.

The greatest terror of Zeke Quigley's life was upon him. Turn in whatever direction he chose, the peril seemed equally great.

There remained but one slight hope of eluding his merciless enemies, and that was by heading for Catfish Cavern.

This was an immense rock, it floated out with it rising some distance above the water, with a narrow entrance, less than half a dozen feet in width.

Here temporary safety at least could be found, for it would require a courage amounting to rashness to follow an enemy there.

The singular freak of nature known as Catfish Cavern, was on the same bank of the river that the settlement stood—that is the shore from which Colonel Woodland started—in itself an unfavorable location.

Desperate as this was, it was the only hope the renegade had, and heading his canoe toward the cavern he rowed with the fury of a man whose life is depending upon his own exertions.

The three pursuers comprehended his intention the instant he changed his direction, and they did their utmost to prevent it. His movement changed their relative positions, so that the renegade took the lead, with the other three converging toward him, and all four laboring as if they were taking part in the international rowing-match.

But Quigley had greatly the advantage, and he succeeded in holding it so well, that he shot into the cavern, a hundred yards in advance of his enemies.

Seeing that he could not be headed off, Colonel Woodland dropped his paddle and caught up his rifle, firing just at the moment the canoe of the renegade plunged into the open mouth of the cavern.

It was an exceedingly close shot, but a "miss is as good as a mile," and Quigley passed in entirely unharmed, and for the time being was safe.

A minute later the three canoes came up simultaneously to the rock.

"Let's follow him right in!" exclaimed Colonel Woodland to the others.

"No; it won't do," replied Burton. "He will have us in fair range, and we'll catch it, sure."

"What shall be done then?" demanded the officer, who could not conceal his vexatious impatience at what had occurred.

"Why, we have got him in there certain, and he can't get out," replied Britton. "All we have to do is to contain ourselves with patience until he is ready to come down."

It soon became known that the noted horse-thief, Zeke Quigley, had been "treed," and fully a hundred people gathered on the bank near Catfish Cavern, in the hope of seeing him captured and executed; for, among them all, there was not one who did not thoroughly detest the cowardly villain.

When it became known, however, that the only way of bringing him to terms was by a course of regular siege, the people lost their patience and gradually withdrew, until by midnight only the three original pursuers in their canoes remained.

"This won't do," said Colonel Woodland; "we must make some systematic arrangement in this business. We three can't sit here in our boats all to-night and to-morrow; we must alternate."

Both Burton and Britton announced themselves ready for any proposition the colonel had to make.

"Suppose then that Burton and myself stay here until daylight, when Britton will come back, and we will send a man to take our place, and rest for to-morrow forenoon. And so we will establish a regular system of sentinel duty."

This plan struck the other two favorably, and it was acted upon at once. Britton paddled ashore and went to rest, while Burton and Colonel Woodland were left alone.

"Can't you think of any way of smoking him out?" asked Colonel Woodland, who was impatient to get the insulter of his daughter into his power. "I don't like the prospect of waiting here several days before he comes to terms."

"Perhaps if we fire in cautiously, we may strike him, but we must look out that we don't get it back again."

The scheme struck Colonel Woodland very favorably, and he determined to follow it up without a second's unnecessary delay.

So the two stealthily paddled up until they were alongside the mouth of the cavern, when they reached the muzzles of their rifles in and discharged them.

Simultaneously with their reports came a fearful howling shriek from within the cavern, followed by a splash into the water.

"He's hit," exclaimed Burton, in a half-suppressed whisper.

"Yes; and done for," added Colonel Woodland. "We have wound up the career of one of the biggest scamps that ever lived."

"Shall we go in and bring him out?"

"No; he may be able to do us some damage before he goes under entirely."

"Hark! I thought I heard some one in the water."

Both listened, but all was still, a fact which pointed strongly toward the supposition of the renegade's death. Still, as there was some risk in venturing in after him, it was wisely concluded to wait until daylight, when the attempt could be made with much less danger.

The two sentinels were sitting some distance from the mouth of the cavern, when a low "'sh!'" from Colonel Woodland caused a perfect hush to fall upon both, and a slight withdrawing of their canoes from the dangerous locality.

As they did so the prow o' an empty canoe was seen slowly issuing from the mouth of the cavern, moving only with the velocity of the tardy current at this point.

The sentinels waited until the entire boat was outside, and slowly drifting downward, when, thinking that perhaps the body of the man they were seeking was within it, the two paddled up beside it, and looked in.

But the canoe had nothing at all in it, except the solitary paddle that had been used by the fugitive.

"That shows that he has been killed," said Burton.

"But what started the boat out?" asked Colonel Wood-

land, who was not exactly satisfied with the appearance of things.

"He has given it a kick when he was going under, and so started it out."

"Shall we let it go or stop it?"

"It don't make much difference, but I will tow it against the shore and leave it there."

This was done in the space of the next few minutes, and Burton returned to his station beside Colonel Woodland."

"The next thing," said he, "will be the body of the gentleman himself."

"That will be likely to remain there until morning, as there is nothing to start it out."

"Yes; I don't think there is much risk in going in there now, but—"

The two men looked at each other and smiled significantly. The same fear restrained both—that shuddering terror of going into the dark, where they knew the cold dead body of a man lay.

There was just sufficient moon to make objects visible for a hundred yards or so, and from where the two sentinels were on duty, they could plainly discern the canoe of the renegade as it rested against the bank.

Referring to it, Burton said :

"It is a fine boat—made by Indians who understand the structure of such thugs; but it had one peculiarity—"

"What is that?"

"It towed as though something were holding it back, or as if a dead weight were attached to it!"

"That is singular; suppose, to help pass away the time between this and morning, you bring it up here and we will make an examination. From the glimpse I got of it, I took it to be something extra."

Burton paddled his boat down-stream, to where he had left the frail vessel, and the next minute he called back the startling words : "—"

CHAPTER VIII.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

A TERRIBLE fear came over Colonel Woodland at the announcement of the disappearance of the canoe.

"Perhaps it has drifted away," he called back. "Look along the shore."

"No, it hasn't," returned Burton, who, while he spoke, was coasting along the bank and looking for the missing boat. "*Some one has taken it away!*"

With this he turned and made his way back to where the alarmed Colonel Woodland was awaiting him.

"Do you know what I suspect?" said he.

"How should I know?"

"That infernal renegade has played a smart trick on us. He is the one who ran away with the canoe."

"How could he do it?" asked the officer, who had formed the same suspicion the moment he heard of the disappearance of the boat.

"Satan has helped him; but I am satisfied that neither of our shots touched him. His yelling was all a blind to make us believe he was hurt, and he was the one that pushed out the canoe, and he was dragging after it when I towed it ashore, and there he has waited until he saw a good chance, worked his way out of sight, and then paddled off—and thus ends the present history of Zeke Quigley."

All this seemed so probable, that Colonel Woodland was satisfied of its truth. Turning the prow of his canoe into the mouth of the cavern, he shot the vessel in, and made a thorough exploration of the interior.

The result was what he anticipated. Not the least sign of any one being there was discovered. There was a projecting shelf of rock upon which, had the renegade been desperately wounded, he undoubtedly would have managed to crawl and lie, but it was bare.

The water within was about five feet in depth, so that

Colonel Woodland was easily able to run his paddle all around the sandy bottom.

When he came out, not a particle of doubt remained.

"We may as well go home, Burton," said he, "for there isn't any use of our staying here any longer. We have just been fools enough to give that villain the chance he wanted to come it over us, and he has done so."

And so the two went homeward, vexed and chagrined beyond description.

Subsequent investigation attested the truth of the theory of Mr. Burton. The cunning renegade, finding he was fairly cornered, was about to advance to the attack of the two men who were acting the sentinel over him, when their shots gave him a new idea, which was acted upon at once.

The howling shriek was done to deceive them into the belief that he had been struck, when, in reality, the bullets had come nowhere near him.

Waiting a few moments, he sunk clean under water, so that his nose barely protruded beneath the canoe, and enabled him to breathe without exposing any part of his body.

At the same time he managed to secure a delicate hold upon the bottom of the canoe, and so began gently floating out of the cavern.

We have shown how skillfully he passed his enemies, who did not suspect any trick until some minutes after, when the canoe was missing.

And by this time Zeke Quigley had secured his own safety, and was leisurely paddling down the Illinois river, on his way to secure a valuable ally in the execution of the scheme which had now become the absorbing object of his life.

Knowing the cowardly nature of Zeke Quigley, it was generally believed that he would take good care never to again run such a risk as that from which he had had such a narrow escape.

In this they were right; for the renegade never recovered from his terror, or believed himself out of danger until he was among the Delawares again.

Here he concluded to remain, but he easily influenced the vicious Cut Nose to undertake the case for him.

Months had passed, and the people of the settlement were

beginning to talk of something else besides the escape of the renegade, although Colonel Woodland could never feel satisfied as long as he knew that Zeke was living.

It was in the autumn of the year, when one morning the negro Cæsar was sent in the family carriage of Colonel Woodland—which was open and without springs, and more properly a wagon—to take Adrian to a neighbor's, about a mile distant.

As there was constant communication between the two settlements, no thought of danger entered the head of either, although, as a matter of safety, the African carried an enormous shot-gun with him.

All went well enough for a time, and the lazy mare was jogging leisurely along over the rough road, which, for most of the distance, led along the edge of a piece of woods, when Cæsar was alarmed by seeing an Indian dart across the road several hundred yards in advance.

He instantly reined up, with the exclamation :

"Gorry nation, Miss Adri'n t dat's orful."

"What do you mean?" she asked, with a feeling of vague alarm.

"I see'd an Injin jump across de road, and hide in de wood."

"Are you sure about it?"

"Jes' as sartin as I am dat I see you dis minute. He went a-scootin' ober from dat stone fence to de woods, jis' like a partridge dat's got skeert and is runnin' away."

"If you are sure about it, you had better turn back at once."

"Dat's jis' what dis chile t'inks," replied the negro, acting instantly upon the advice.

The mare which was drawing this carriage was never noted for her speed, and Cæsar was so nervous from his great terror that he nearly upset the vehicle before he succeeded in getting the head of the horse turned the other way, and not a little valuable time was lost in the maneuver.

During these trying moments, Adrian was constantly looking back for the red-skin, and just as the wagon started forward again, she saw two Indians rise apparently from the very ground and start on a run toward them.

"Drive up, Cæsar, they are coming," she called to the servant. "They will be on us in a minute, if you lose any time."

The affrighted negro needed no urging. He was already lashing the mare, and she was plunging along on a full gallop, at the imminent risk of dislocating every joint and smashing every thing to flinders.

Yet, although the mare did her utmost, her speed amounted to a trifling rate, and Adrian's face blanched with horror as she saw the two Indians rapidly gaining upon them.

"Cæsar, they are coming! Can't you make Dolly go faster?"

"He'll bu'st sumfin' now de way he is tearin' 'long—my liebben!"

Still he laid on the ox-gad, that he always carried with him, and the phthisicky mare puffed like a steam engine.

Cæsar cast a hurried glance over his shoulder, and caught sight of the two frightfully-painted savages coming up the road.

About this time the servant began yelling in the hope of attracting the attention of Colonel Woodland and some of the folks at the settlement.

As the Indians were also whooping, the din became frightful.

The situation of Adrian Woodland was terrible, and becoming worse each moment. She well knew that the panting mare was doing her utmost, and still the Indians were coming up with a rapidity which made a speedy capture inevitable.

Suddenly three Indians sprung from the wood into the road in front of them. They were thus in the front and in the rear.

Cæsar picked up his shot-gun.

"Miss Adri'n, you hold de lines, and I'll pepper one of 'em, sure, and mebbe de oders will git so skeert dat dey'll run away."

The African spoke with remarkable coolness, and the trembling girl took the reins.

The three savages who appeared in their front were gesticulating with their arms, so as to signal to the driver to stop, and at the same time to frighten his horse.

But the latter was urged to her utmost, and the red-skins, finding that their signs were of no avail, stepped aside so as to be ready to spring into the vehicle as it passed.

When within a half dozen yards, Cæsar suddenly raised his gun.

"Blast yer, take dat!"

As he spoke, he sent something like a half-pound of buck-shot right in the face and eyes of the foremost savage, who, with a shriek of anguish, threw up his arms and fell backward, dead.

This unexpected demonstration had the effect of paralyzing the remaining Indians for a moment, during which the carriage dashed by them.

But it was only for a moment. As Cæsar glanced back, he saw both of the savages raise their guns.

"Quick! duck your head! Dey're gwine to shoot!"

Adrian barely had time to avoid the shots, as the bullets whizzed over their heads.

"Now I'll take de lines ag'in," said Cæsar, as he received them from her hands, and renewed his basting of the mare, that was already beginning to flag.

The four Indians, who had thus been temporarily baffled, were by no means disposed to give up the chase, but now renewed it with greater vigor than ever.

At this critical juncture, when both Adrian and Cæsar began to hope that their voices had reached the ears of some of their friends, and that a rescue was not impossible, an appalling accident dissipated the last spark of hope, and insured their doom.

The wagon-wheel striking an obstruction in the road, both traces parted, and the terrified mare continued her wild flight, while mistress and servant were left behind.

"Gorry nation! Miss Adri'n, run! dere goes de last ob de mare!" exclaimed Cæsar.

Both were on the ground in a twinkling, and placing her white hand in the horny palm of the African, the two ran on down the road with all the speed of which they were capable.

By this time, less than fifty yards separated pursuer and pursued.

"Let's scoot fur de woods!" called out Cæsar, making an abrupt turn to the left, "and see if we can't hide."

"There is no use," wailed Adrian, holding back in despair, "we may as well give up at once! Oh, why doesn't father come?"

"Come on; nebber say die—"

They were the last words poor Cæsar ever uttered, for they were yet in his mouth, when Adrian felt a spasmodic closing of the hand upon hers, a gasp, and the faithful fellow sunk down and died without another struggle.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAIR CAPTIVE.

THE negro had been killed by a shot of one of the Indians, and Adrian Woodland was left alone, with the whole four in pursuit.

She continued her flight more from instinct than from any result of a reasoning process, while the savages, seeing that the matter was decided, came up at a leisurely gait, and captured her before she had gone a hundred feet further.

The first Indian who laid his hand upon her was the hideous-looking Cut Nose, whose face appeared ten-fold more frightful as it expanded with a grin of exultation, while he looked upon the beautiful features of the shuddering captive.

"Huh! much nice!" he muttered, taking her by the arm, and turning her round so as to gaze full into her face.

Adrian uttered a piercing scream, that was heard by her father; but Cut Nose brandished his tomahawk in such a threatening manner that she durst not break silence again.

The Delawares understood the certainty of immediate pursuit, and they started homeward without a moment's unnecessary delay.

About a mile distant, by following a somewhat circuitous

route, they reached the Illinois river, and embarked in a couple of canoes.

When a party of Indians suspect pursuit, and are given a good start, it is almost impossible for the most experienced trailers or woodmen to overtake them.

By taking to the water within a mile of their starting point, the Delawares completely hid their trail and made their subsequent journey through the woods perfectly safe from pursuit.

During the whole time that Adrian was on this distressing journey, she was treated with respect and consideration; but she never gave up the hope of being followed and rescued by her friends, until the village of the Delawares was reached, and she was domiciled in the family of the chief, Flying Antelope.

Then for a time utter despair took possession of her, and she wished for death rather than life.

She was awakened from this depth of gloom, on the next day after her arrival, by the sudden appearance of the hated Zeke Quigley before her.

The renegade surveyed her for a few moments in silence, while his naturally broad mouth was expanded into an enormous grin. Suddenly he gave a guffaw, and exclaimed:

"So ye made up yer mind, Adrian, to come and live with me, did yer?"

She looked up at him, with the old flash in her eyes.

"Do you call this bravery to insult me when I am powerless?"

"Nobody meant to insult yer. As it war rather too hot for me in the neighborhood of yer place, I got Cut Nose to undertake the job for me, and he done it well."

"How soon am I to return home?"

The renegade burst into one of his guffaws again.

"I said you might make yer folks a visit about once a year. Ef yer behave yerself purty well, I'll let yer do that."

"Very well; I am much obliged to you."

Quigley stood a minute or two, as if he had something upon his mind which he did not know exactly how to introduce; but it came out at last:

"Adrian, the lodge is all fixed and waiting fur ye."

"Let it keep on waiting, then," said she, turning about and walking into the house of the chief.

The renegade was considerably taken aback at this cavalier treatment, but he called after her:

"I'll let yer alone till to-morrer and then I'll be arter yer and you've got to go!"

The remarkable beauty and amiability of Adrian Woodland made her quite a favorite in the family of Flying Antelope who expressed his wish to adopt her, and the girl deemed it prudent to consent.

She obtained the promise of the chief that she should not be compelled to remain with any one else, and then she awaited with some composure the coming of her enthusiastic admirer.

Early in the forenoon the renegade made his appearance, and presenting himself to Flying Antelope, asked for his assistance in compelling the captive to become his wife according to the established custom among the Delaware Indians. He was met with the reply that the girl had been adopted into his family, and he could not consent to her departure.

It would be difficult to picture the amazement and fury of the renegade at this cool answer. He raved and swore, but it was of no avail against such a prompt chief as Flying Antelope, who quietly turned his back upon him and walked into the lodge.

Now began a wearisome and vexatious captivity to our heroine.

It was providential indeed that she was adopted into the family of Flying Antelope, as it protected her from all rudeness and harm; nevertheless, she pined for her home from which she had been so rudely torn, and wondered why her friends did not come to claim her.

And so the time wore away, until the coming of the great freshet of which we were speaking when our story opened. This was so unprecedently great that it swept away a portion of the Delaware village, including the lodge of Flying Antelope.

The chief was barely able to save his own family from

drowning, and placed his wife and Adrian in a canoe, while he looked after the safety of the children.

The danger becoming serious, the wife sprung overboard to rescue one of her impaled ones, and Adrian was thus left alone.

All was blank darkness, and in the swirl of the rushing waters, she was separated from the others and found herself drifting alone down the river. She hardly knew what to do, but she struggled hard with the paddle through the night until daylight, when she found she was alone on the bosom of the vast overflowed river.

Without food, and tired to utter exhaustion, she fell asleep about noon, from which she was awakened by Brandon Havens, as we have narrated at the beginning of our story.

She had gone through such a trial that her mind was temporarily affected, which may account for her rather singular conduct, in the presence of the young man.

She could not make herself certain whether he was a friend or an enemy, and so she treated him with some distrust.

When she was left alone, for a time, while Havens went to the top of an adjoining hill to take observations, she was immediately approached by Flying Antelope, who had landed some hours before, and who saw her come ashore.

Adrian made no objection to going with him, and the chief, with his entire family around him, camped in the woods that night, and on the morrow started homeward again.

His strong and skilled arm carried them there easily in his canoe, and the close of the day witnessed Adrian safely domiciled with her old friends again.

And now leaving her for a short time, we must look at incidents occurring elsewhere.

The screams of Adrian Woodland, and the shouts of Cæsar, when attacked by the Delawares, reached the ears of Colonel Woodland, who, accompanied by three men, all on horseback, instantly started to their assistance.

But the attack and capture occurred in such a short time, that when the rescuers reached the ground, the captors were

far away, with their captive, speeding through the wood toward the river.

Instant pursuit was made, and the Delawares were tracked to the river, where, as a matter of course, all trace of them was lost.

But, urged on by the father, a search of nearly a week's duration was made, with no result, however, and Colonel Woodland returned home, bowed and stricken to his almost broken-hearted wife.

What to do they were at a loss to decide, but they could never remain idle, while their beloved child was lost to them.

At this opportune moment, Hugh Kyle appeared on the scene, who was made acquainted with the sad occurrence, and he sought to assist the afflicted friends in their distressing calamity.

And had it not been for a serious mistake made by Colonel Woodland, there is reason to believe that the famous scout would have specially effected the rescue of his daughter Adrian.

There was no doubt but that the renegade Quigley was at the bottom of the affair, and consequently she was to be sought among the tribe of Indians where he had made his home.

From some unaccountable cause, the colonel had the impression that Quigley was living among the Sioux of the North-west; and, acting upon this supposition, Kyle started at once for the hunting-grounds of that tribe.

Several months were thus consumed, and in the dead of winter he returned to Colonel Woodland, with the declaration that Quigley had never been among that tribe, and they had had no hand in the capture of Adrian.

The father was all at sea again, and for a time was in despair, but he could not give up all hope of seeing his child again, and he urged Kyle to continue the hunt, promising him the most munificent reward, whether he succeeded in his hunt or not.

Kyle, for a long time past, had lost all knowledge of Zeke Quigley, so that he had not the slightest suspicion of his having taken up with the Delaware Indians, although the scout

came in more frequent contact with that tribe than with any other.

Assiduous inquiry failed to enlighten him upon that point, and, acting upon a dim suspicion, he started for the region of the Crows.

It is scarcely necessary to state that this journey was as fruitless as his preceding one.

Much time had thus been wasted, and Kyle was on his return to state to Colonel Woodland that he saw no hope in continuing the search any longer.

On his way back he passed through the Delaware country, and came in sight of a party of that people engaged upon a hunt.

More from the force of custom than any thing else, he carefully scrutinized them, and to his surprise recognized the renegade Quigley among them.

The mystery was explained, and he hastened to Colonel Woodland with the gratifying intelligence that he had found the trail at last, and had hope of bringing his daughter back to him.

Colonel Woodland was roused from the lowest depths of despair to the lights of hope, and he asked to accompany Kyle in his search.

But the hunter preferred to go alone, and he left him with the promise that he would never show his face again until he brought the captive with him.

Starting out for the third time, Kyle reached the Delaware country at the time of the great freshet, to which we have made such frequent reference.

We have shown his meeting with the brothers Gaskill, and his separation from them, after they had been conducted to a place of safety.

CHAPTER X.

A STRANGE DELIVERANCE.

WE left Brandon Havens pursuing his way through the wood, after his separation from Adrian Woodland, disconsolate, gloomy and despairing.

It will be remembered that he was stealthily followed by an Indian, who had first seen him, when he was standing upon the top of the hill, taking his survey of the surrounding country.

In the distance he had descried the smoke of a camp-fire, which, somehow or other, he fancied belonged to friends, and to which he intended to hasten with his adored.

But, when he found that she was irrecoverably gone, he forgot all about the camp-fire, and plunged into the woods, caring naught where he went, or what became of him.

This was fortunate in one respect for him ; for had he carried out his first intention of making his way to the camp-fire, he would have come upon a party of sanguinary Delawares, who would have made short work with him.

Fortunate, then, was it that his footsteps were turned in another direction, so that he was led away from this great danger.

But a greater peril remained. Scarcely a hundred feet separated him from the murderous Indian that stole along behind him, with the silence of a phantom.

It would have been the easiest matter in the world for the red-skin to have whisked up behind him, and finished him at a single blow ; but the wily assassin appeared to think that there was a chance of securing a greater prize by waiting.

For it seemed probable that the pale-face was making his way toward his friends, and by keeping within striking distance, the coveted opportunity of gaining another scalp might be added to the one already before him.

So the two made their way through the woods—pursuer and pursued—the panther-like eyes of the former fixed upon

the latter, who, all the time, had no suspicion of the fearful doom gradually drawing higher and higher to him.

It was just in the early dusk of the evening, and objects were dimly visible for some distance.

It was the gloomiest part of the whole twenty-four hours, and Brandon Havens, as he wandered aimlessly along, was perhaps the most miserable being that trod the earth.

¶ The fairy form of Adrian Woodland—the matchless face and figure, the soulful eyes, the wealth of raven hair, the sad, enchanting, enrapturing expression of the face was gone, gone forever.

What a bliss it would have been had the coveted privilege been given him, of piloting this glorious vision of his dreams through the woods, to some place of safety! How gladly he would have fought and laid down his life in her defense!

And the future! What dazzling pictures the rosy fingers of imagination had already drawn! What bewildering castles in the air! How he wandered through their fairy halls, with her by his side!

How golden the sunshine, how sweet the air, how fragrant the woods—how good was every thing.

But what a “change had come o'er the spirit of his dreams!”

Every thing was darkness and despair; what though he had a pleasant home, with affectionate friends awaiting his return, the great sun of his attraction was gone.

Henceforth the world was dark and forbidding. Henceforth there was to be nothing but distress and misery before him.

From this gloomy reverie, he was awakened by the crackling of undergrowth in front of him, and raising his head, he found to his amazement that he was face to face with an enormous black bear!

The instinct of self-preservation is ever strong in the human heart, and the young man, who, a few minutes before, was in the very depths of black despair, and almost wishing for death, now raised his gun and put himself in a position of self-defense.

The brute was no ways loth, although it was evident the meeting was as great a surprise to him as to the hunter. He

stood for a moment perfectly motionless, as if seeking to take in all the "points" of his adversary, and then with a low growl of anger advanced to the attack.

This was what Havens expected, and waiting until he thought the animal was the right distance from him, he raised his gun, took a quick aim and fired.

The shot was only partially successful. It struck the brute in the neck, making an aggravating wound, without necessarily being dangerous.

The instant he was hit by the ball, the bear reared himself on his hind legs, and began picking at the wound with his claws, as if he imagined it to be caused by a splinter, which he was seeking to extract from his flesh.

This lasted but a moment, however, when he dropped down on all fours and made a plunge toward the author of all this trouble.

But the latter had improved his time to the utmost, and the instant he fired the shot, had turned on his heel and fled at the top of his speed.

He was invisible in the darkness, but the unavoidable noise made by the fugitive in his flight, was distinctly audible to the brute, which instantly made toward him, at a speed that would have insured his destruction, had not a most singular occurrence intervened.

In starting back, Havens had nearly doubled on his own tracks, but had turned somewhat to the right, so that he was pursuing an entirely different and new course.

The bear charging in pursuit had taken a leap or two, when the Indian came in sight. The savage, at the moment the gun was fired, was shut out from the sight of his prey by the intervening undergrowth, and he immediately hurried toward to ascertain the meaning of the report.

Some wild animals display a great sagacity in identifying their enemies, but the bear is not very celebrated in that way.

Catching sight of the Indian, he very naturally took him for the merciless hunter, who had inflicted such grievous injury upon him, and he "went for" him, without hesitation, and with a low growl of fury.

The amazed red-skin fired his rifle in such precipitation that

It missed the brute altogether, while it never checked its flight in the least.

Fully comprehending the desperate danger that menaced him, the Delaware turned and darted away with all haste, and made for a small tree up which he began furiously climbing.

But, great as was his haste, it was insufficient to take him out of his peril.

Ere he had ascended a half-dozen feet, the bear was upon him, and caught one of his feet in his claws, and dragged him to the earth.

Thus compelled to fight, the savage turned and attacked his foe with his knife.

The contest was severe and long continued, but it can be summed up in the announcement that its conclusion left a live bear and dead Indian on the field, and the imminent peril which had threatened Brandon Havens was turned aside.

After running several hundred yards, the latter paused and listened. All was still, and he rightly concluded that the threatened danger was passed.

Then, as he reloaded his gun, he muttered :

‘ Why did I run from the bear? Why do I wish life, when all that can make life happy is taken away? Better to have perished in the woods!’

But, these were the repinings of a heart unduly weighed down by its own grief, and they could not last.

Great as was the young man’s hunger, his fatigue was still greater, and he finally threw himself down beside a fallen tree, and immediately dropped asleep.

The same kind Providence that watches over his children, when asleep or awake, kept guard over the sleeper, who was in a labyrinth of peril, and he awoke in the morning to find the sun shining and himself unharmed.

By this time, Havens was almost famished, and he saw that the first thing necessary was for him to procure something to eat.

Again good fortune directed him. He had wandered but a short distance, his eye and ear alert for the first appearance of game, when he stumbled upon the camp, to which reference has already been made, and which the Delawares had left scarcely an hour before.

A slight examination shewed that a party of Indians had been there very recently; but, what was then of the most importance to Brandon Havens, he discovered quite a quantity of venison, cooked and ready for eating, which the Indians had left behind them.

It is not necessary to refer to the avidity with which this was devoured by the hungry hunter, nor to the relief and comfort he experienced, when, at last, he had eaten his fill.

The continued depression of spirits which Havens had so long experienced, now reacted somewhat, and he found himself in a more hopeful frame of mind.

What though the beautiful Adrian had disappeared? It was by no means improbable that she was living and had been found and retaken by some of the Delaware Indians.

If such was the case, she was not entirely lost to him; but might be sought out, be followed and watched, and with the blessing of Heaven, rescued and returned to her friends, and, as he prayed, to him again.

This was something like the thread of his thoughts, as he walked through the forest, with the cheerful song of the birds all about him.

Unconsciously to himself, he had turned his steps toward the Rattlesnake river, and, before he was aware of it, he found himself standing upon its bank.

Unacquainted as Brandon was with this section of the great West, it needed but a glance of his to see that the tremendous rise of the river had subsided greatly since the preceding day, and was still falling very fast. So much so, indeed, that a day or two more was all that was necessary for the stream to sink to its former level.

As he looked out upon the muddy current, he could still see the trees, stumps and *débris* drifting by him, most of which had undoubtedly come hundreds of miles.

The sky was clear, and the sun shining with a grateful warmth. The storm was ended, and severe as it had been, all nature looked refreshed and invigorated; and no one could have stood at that time in the place of Brandon Havens and been a misanthrope. Every thing was too fresh, too cheerful, too bracing not to impart its own qualities to human nature itself.

A long stretch of woods on either shore, the swift sweep of the water, the clear, azure sky—all was the same.

But suddenly he started. Far out upon the river he saw a small Indian canoe, dancing over the water and heading straight toward him.

A single man was in it, and he, of course, was a red-skin hunter.

Thus thought Havens; but while he looked, a doubt arose in his mind. Although somewhat resembling an Indian, the occupant, as he came closer, took on a familiar appearance.

While Havens was still gazing in doubt and wonder, the man stopped paddling for a moment to swing his hat over his head and to shout.

Then our hero recognized him; and, as he came closer, and stepped ashore, he grasped the hand of his old friend, Hugh Kyle.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HIDDEN FOE.

BRANDON HAVENS had always been a favorite with the hunter, Hugh Kyle, and the meeting between them was of the most cordial character.

When each had told his story, the amazement of both was unbounded.

Unskilled as was the hunter in all that appertained to the passion of love, he was yet shrewd enough to understand the feeling that had been awakened in the heart of his young friend, and he plumply told him of it.

"I wo'n't deny it, Hugh," replied our hero, with a blush, "but how could I help it? So beautiful, so interesting, so—"

"Thar! thar! I don't blame yer fur it!" laughed Kyle. "Yer see'd 'nough of her to fall head over heels in love—that's plain; but yer hain't seen 'nough of her to understand what she is. She is jist as good and sweet as she is purty—

and the man that gits her gits a prize—that I kin tell yer, gure."

"I know it, I know it; and if she is lost, I shall never be happy again."

"I don't know much 'bout what they call *lore*," remarked the hunter, with a grin, "bein' as I never had any thing to love 'cept my old mother, that's eighty-nine year old, and I don't s'pose you feel toward this gal as I do toward her; but as near as I kin tell, you've got the reg'lar thing, though not bad 'nough to kill yer quite dead yit."

"As you have started out with the resolve to recapture the lady, you will allow me to go with you and help. Indeed, *you must*."

"Wal, a love-sick younker like you ain't jist the chap a feller wants with him at sich a time; but as yer heart seems to be sot on it, I'll take yer 'long and see if I kin keep yer straight. Howsomever, yer must bear in mind that I'm to be boss of this yer job."

"Of course I shall never venture to dispute you on any question, nor will I refuse to take your commands, when it is so evident that I know nothing and you know every thing."

"That's the talk, my boy; stick to that and that'll be no trouble."

"I am ready and anxious to be under way."

"See hyar," said Kyle, assuming a serious air, "thar's a qu'ar look put onto things by what you've told me."

"I don't know what you mean," said Havens, in some astonishment.

"What do you s'pose 'come of the gal arter you left her in the boat?"

"It is impossible to tell. You see she disappeared, and the canoe too; but the dead body of poor Wolf seems partly to explain the matter."

"Wal, the Injins got her ag'in."

"But how was it that I saw nothing of them?"

"They wa'n't on the water, but on the shore. They see'd you come ashore, and the minute you got out of sight, they come down, knocked over the dog to prevent a rumpus, picked up the canoe, and walked off in the woods with it and with the gal too."

This was a new view of the case, but Havens admitted its reasonableness, and after a few minutes' reflection, he fully believed it. No other explanation would answer at all.

"But why did they not disturb me?" was the natural question that came to his lips. "They certainly must have known that I was somewhere not far off."

"That's only one reason that can be give fur that," replied the hunter, "and if that's the true one, things look a powerful sight better for us than they could any other way."

As a matter of course, Havens was very anxious to hear the hunter's explanation. *

"I've larnt 'nough to know that the gal is held by a chief of the Delawares, who has adopted her in his family and won't let anybody else have her. Wal, you see this hyar confounded fresh hain't been such a bad thing after all, as it has made a sweep through the Injin village, and cleaned 'em out. Somehow or other the gal has got loose in the canoe, and the chief has started in search of her. You've happened to come in to shore purty nigh whar he had landed and was lookin' over the river fur yer, so all he had to do was to wait his chance and walk off with her ag'in, as he did."

"But you haven't told me why he let *me* alone all this time."

"The chief who holds the gal ain't quite so bad as the others, as may be see'd by the way he treats *her*. But, it's lucky thar didn't any of the other imps git a sight of yer."

From this it will be seen that the hunter penetrated and understood the precise manner of Adrian Woodland's falling again into the hands of her captors. It required no ordinary shrewdness to reason back from effect to cause in this manner, but his great experience and knowledge of woodcraft enabled him to do so.

"How is that to be so particularly advantageous to us, if your conjectures are true?" asked Havens, who, as yet, had not reached the drift of the hunter's thought.

"You see all this hyar tuk place last night, and on this side the river, which makes it very likely that the gal is thar still, fur the chief wouldn't be apt to hurry her much after what she'd already been through."

Brandon Havens threw his hat in the air

"Hurrah for you, Kyle; you're right! We'll have her sure."

But Kyle was not so jubilant. He had seen such manifestations before, and understood them too well.

"Thar's one thing yer must keep in mind," said he, with the same solemnity of manner that had distinguished his previous utterances.

Havens turned inquiringly toward him.

"We hain't got the gal yet. P'raps the chief has got her ag'in with him, in which case thar's got to be some hard work done afore she is out of the woods."

"What chance of her rescue will there then be?"

"Wal, thar's some considerable chance as long as the reds don't smell a rat, and find we're nosin' round; ef they Parn what we're after, thar'll be some harder work than all. Sho havin' been with the reds so long, in course has a chance to git outside of the lodge without bein' watched, and we've got to be ready at some of these times, to nab her up and be off with her."

"What's to be done?"

"We can soon find out if the chief is down the river or not. If he is, it won't be long afore we'll see him in his canoe comin' up or crossin' over."

"If he is anywhere on this side the river, and halted for the night, he can not be far off, for I have not come any great distance since then."

"He mought be a powerful sight closer nor we think; what I'm afcared of is, that he has been so near he's see'd us, and streaked off for other parts, and so got out of our way."

"One minute you discourage me, and the next you fill me with hope," replied Havens, who spoke the literal truth regarding himself. "But, at any rate, I know that if human power, blessed by the smiles of Heaven, can accomplish any thing, the rescue of Adrian Woodland is certain."

"Wal, at most it's a slippery business. I've done this thing off and on fur the last twenty odd years, and sometimes I've missed, though I ginerally managed to come out right in the end with most of 'em."

"It seems to me that we will be more likely to encounter

them on the other side than here," said Havens, whose anxiety would not allow him to keep still, or to remain motionless for more than a minute at a time.

"Wal, I dunno," replied the hunter, "but bein' hyar we'd better stay hyar fur the present. Yer go up the bank a ways, and ef yer see any thing, whistle and I'll come to yer, and yer kin do the same fur me."

This arrangement being agreed upon, the two separated, Kyle walking carefully upward through the undergrowth, while our hero did the same.

In this way perhaps three quarters of an hour passed, and they had become separated by a distance of several hundred yards.

Both had anxiously scanned the river, but without detecting any thing of importance.

Hugh Kyle began to fear, after all, that a mistake had been made, and that the chief, with Adrian, was well on his way back to the village, if he had not already reached there, and that a work of extreme difficulty was before him.

In the intensity with which both of the hunters had scanned the river, they had almost forgotten the lapse of time, and neither had any conception of the distance they were really apart.

Kyle, as might naturally be expected, was the first to rouse to a sense of the situation, although he had wandered further than he intended at the beginning.

Taking one glance at the stream, he turned about and began rapidly retracing his steps.

Now and then he paused and listened, but heard nothing but the rush and swash of the river beside him, and then he hastened onward.

He was not a little astonished when he found the distance he traversed before reaching his canoe, where they had separated.

From this he saw that Havens must still be a good distance away, and with a vague feeling of alarm, he hurried down the shore, his speed frequently getting the better of his discretion.

Why it was he could not explain, but he found a very oppressive sense of coming evil creeping over him. It seemed

to be one of those presentiments which occasionally weigh us down, and which appear really to be the "shadow of coming events."

Not a sound reached him, nor was a sign visible, and yet he became almost certain that something wrong had happened to his young friend.

He was in this nervous condition of mind, when he was startled by hearing the whistle which the two had agreed upon as the signal. It sounded quite a distance away, but it was clear and distinct, and there was no mistaking it.

"I do b'f'eve that yer younker is in trouble," muttered the scout, as he hastened forward. "That yer whistle sounds as though he had found somethin' he didn't want to find."

One peculiarity attracted the notice of Kyle, and it only deepened the conviction that something had gone amiss with his friend.

The whistle, instead of coming from the shore, as it ought to have done, if all was right, and he had descried something of importance, came from the *interior of the wood*—a fact which boded good only upon the supposition that his comrade had come upon the encampment of the Indians and their captive—a supposition so improbable that Kyle did not give it a second thought.

Explain it as he chose, there was but one way in which he could do so with any reason, and that was that Brandon Havens was in trouble and had sent out the cry for help.

Man nor woman had yet to appeal to the large-hearted trapper in vain, and the "grass did not grow under his feet," as he sped toward the direction of the sign of distress.

Suddenly he paused!

Suspicion resolved itself into certainty.

On the mossy ground over which he was now hastening he caught the imprint of Havens' foot.

It was there, clear and distinct, and there was no mistaking.

And equally clear and distinct beside it was the imprint of an *Indian moccasin*.

And almost at the same moment he was made aware of the approach of one of the red-skins themselves.

CHAPTER XII.

KYLE'S EXPLOIT.

BRANDON HAVENS was sorely in need of help indeed! It seemed, for a time, as if the Fates were against the success of the different schemes attempted for the rescue of Adrian Woodland, and for a time all progress was stayed.

From the moment of his separation from Hugh Kyle, his whole soul was so intent upon scanning the rushing river for some semblance of a canoe, with its precious freight, that he saw nothing else, nor indeed did aught else enter his thoughts.

More than once was he brought to a stand-still, by coming in collision with some tree-trunk which he had not seen, but which he was made to feel in an unquestionably emphatic manner.

Then again, he caught his foot in some projecting root and was almost thrown headlong to the ground, or caught his chin beneath some limb, the sawing of which recalled him to a sense of his situation, and for a few minutes made him more careful of his footsteps.

Thus stumbling and groping forward, he had gone a considerable distance when again he caught his foot and stumbled to the ground.

He was in the act of rising, when his arms were suddenly seized from behind, and in a twinkling he was made as secure as if handcuffed.

Turning his head, Havens saw that he was in the grasp of two Indians, who, he did not doubt for an instant, were Delawares.

"How do, brudder?" said one of them, with a grin of delight at the success of their maneuver, while at the same time they took pains to render his custody still more secure.

Havens struggled and did all in his power to free himself,

but he was helpless, and he finally ceased his efforts from sheer exhaustion.

"Brudder heap well?" inquired the same savage, who appeared to have an abiding interest in the bodily health of the young man.

"Keep your mouth shut!" peremptorily commanded the latter, who was in any thing but a pleasant mood, at the manner in which he had been checked while engaged in his pursuit.

The arms having been securely pinioned, the Indians took possession of all his weapons, and then placing themselves one on either side, they ordered him to "go much ahead."

There was nothing to be gained by refusing, and Havens obeyed with commendable alacrity.

The party walked quite briskly, and as they hurried along, Brandon Havens began to collect his thoughts.

While he was annoyed and vexed at the turn affairs had taken, he by no means despaired or gave up hope.

Had it not been for the proximity of Kyle, he would have been in the depths of despair again; but the hunter was so all-powerful in times like these that he came to lean upon him as a child leans upon its parent.

The first thing that occurred to Havens was that he was walking altogether more rapidly than there was any necessity for. As every step away from the river only took him so much further away from safety, he concluded that he was expediting matters too much by keeping pace with his painted and grinning captors.

He had already taken a number of lessons in tumbling, so that when he fell sprawling to the ground, it had a very natural look and excited no suspicion upon the part of the Indians.

As they were not aware of the proximity of the famous scout they had little fear of pursuit, and were not as urgent in hurrying their captive forward as they otherwise would have been.

Indeed, had they been aware of the danger which menaced them, Havens would have been tomahawked on the spot, for they would have run no risk of an encounter with the man

whose exploits had been famous among their people for years past.

The captive bethought him of the signal for communicating with Kyle, but he was fearful of uttering it, lest it should also be comprehended by the red-skins, who would bring things to a crisis at once.

More than once he had shaped his mouth to utter the whistle, but something stayed its utterance with the whisper that the favorable moment would soon come.

Some distance was traversed in this manner, until they reached a large branching tree, standing in a sort of opening, when the three halted.

Just at this juncture, a bird, in the very top of the tree, gave utterance to a peculiar whistle-like song.

Havens looked up at it, as though attracted by its pretty notes, and then, as if replying to it, he gave the whistle agreed upon between Kyle and himself.

It was all done so naturally that the vigilant Delawares never for a moment suspected that any thing lay at the bottom of it, not even when the captive repeated the whistle, all the time gazing up through the branches, as if he were seeking to charm the feathered songster.

It was a mystery to Havens to understand why the Indians had halted, when they had proceeded but such a short distance, but it was soon explained.

It appeared that the savages were not altogether satisfied that their prize had not its counterpart somewhere in the neighborhood; and, before advancing further, they wished to make sure of the whereabouts of his companions, that is, provided he had any.

So, while one rested, the other took the back-trail to make sure of the rear.

This precaution is adopted very frequently by Indians when on their march through the woods, to prevent any party of rescue stealing upon and surprising them, either when in camp or on the march.

It is not to be supposed that the red-skin who thus turned back had any idea of the lion he was to encounter in his path, but the whole thing was done, as we have stated, as an ordinary matter of precaution.

A short distance from where they had seized their captive, the red-skin sprung across a small brook. At the very instant of doing so, a shadowy form leaped out upon him, he knew not from whither, and a pair of vise-like arms were thrown around him, and he was dashed to the ground with the quickness of lightning.

The savage realized that he was locked in a death-grapple, and struggled furiously, but he was almost powerless, and in less time than it takes us to record it, his earthly career was ended.

"Thar! confound yer!" muttered Kyle, as he disengaged himself and rose to his feet. "Yer never learned to follow a back-track, and I guess it's ruther too late fur yer to learn."

Leaving him where he lay, he resumed the trail from which he had been suddenly diverted by the unexpected appearance of the Delaware.

Kyle advanced with greater caution than before; for, although no outcry had escaped the red-skin during the struggle, yet it was often the custom of the Indians to send a second man upon the back-trail, to guard against the results of just such an occurrence as had taken place a few minutes before.

Then, too, it would be known how long he ought to be absent, and continuing away beyond that time would excite suspicion.

So, from more than one cause, there was the necessity for the greatest circumspection upon his part, and Kyle was not the man to throw away an opportunity by any carelessness or inattention.

He walked rapidly along the trail, his eyes bent ahead, so as to detect the approach of an enemy the instant it was revealed by any cautious separation of the bushes or under-growth.

But even had the remaining Indian been apprehensive of the fate of his companion, he could not have left the captive and gone to his assistance.

Kyle had withdrawn the tomahawk from the belt of the fallen Delaware, and with it in his right hand and his rifle in his left, he walked rapidly forward until he reached the clearing, where he read the facts at a glance.

Certain there was but one red-skin to encounter, he strode straight forward, without any concealment, until he confronted both captor and captive.

The latter of course was delighted to see him, and did not fail to express his pleasure.

"Just in time, Kyle; a little later, and it would have been too late; but be careful; there's another Indian somewhere about."

"Yas, and this hyar red 'll soon be 'bout too," replied the scout.

When the savage saw the white man stride into the clearing, he grasped his knife and prepared for the desperate hand-to-hand encounter.

He confronted the comer for a moment, and then, while gazing earnestly in his face, he seemed suddenly to become aware of his identity, and to the surprise of the hunter, with a suppressed whoop of dismay, turned on his heel, and plunged into the woods.

But fast as he went, the skillfully poised and powerfully huried tomahawk overtook him, and struck him to the earth.

Ere he could rise, Kyle was upon him, and his spirit was speedily sent to join that of his brother in the happy hunting-grounds.

In a twinkling, the bonds which held Havens' hands were cut, and he was free again.

"It begins to look to me," laughed the latter, "as if the red-men were rather plenty on this side the river."

"Thar be plenty of 'em on both sides, fur that matter, and, as thar don't seem to be much chance of the gal bein hyar, we'll cross, too."

CHAPTER XIII.

WATCHING AND WAITING.

By this time, Hugh Kyle had become fully satisfied that Adrian Woodland was on the other side of the river, and that all the time spent in their present position was lost.

So he determined to cross without delay, and in case nothing was found upon the other side, they would press on to the Delaware village and make a reconnoissance to find whether she was there or not.

If she were there, it was there that their work lay. If nothing could be seen of her, or of the chief, who was known to the scout by sight, then his whole energy was to be devoted to hunting them up and intercepting them before they could reach their village.

When the hunter had once made up his mind, he did not take long to act.

Immediately upon restoring Havens to liberty, the two set out for the river, reaching it at the point where they had left their canoe.

Five minutes later the delicate boat was upon the swiftly-rushing river, headed and rapidly propelled toward the other shore by the strong and skillful arm of Kyle.

The river was still falling rapidly, but it required a half-hour's hard pulling before they placed their feet upon dry land again.

"Hyar we'll leave the canoe," said Kyle, "till we come back ag'in."

"How are you going to conceal it?"

"I'll show yer."

The hunter gathered several large boulders which he carefully placed in the canoe, so as not to injure its delicate sides, or bottom, and he then tipped it till it filled with water and sunk.

This left nothing at all visible, except the thin, strong cord which bound it to an overhanging bush—the fastening being

so insignificant, that it could not be expected to attract the attention even of an eagle-eyed Delaware.

"Thar, that'll stay thar till it's wanted!" exclaimed Kyle, when the work was done. "Now we'll make a start for the Injin settlements."

"How is it?" inquired Havens, as they walked along, "that this side of the river is the least dangerous, when the Delawares have their lodges here? It seems it ought to be just the opposite way."

"Thar's whar a m'm's eddyerion comes in," replied Kyle, with some pride, at the prospect of enlightening his young friend. "Ef y'd studied the woods and Injin ways as much as I have, yer wouldn't ax such a question."

"The way of it is, the best huntin'-grounds ar' on t'other side, and that's why yer find so many of the red-skins allers thar. But, they claim the territory east of the river, and to show everybody that it belongs to them, they have built thar lodges thar, and they make thar hum thar. But the warriors ar' so much on t'other side that you're allers sure of findin' 'em thar, while on this side you ain't sure of stumblin' on any of 'em unless you git mighty clus to the settlements. Thar they ar' as thick as fleas, and thar's jist whar I hope the gal hasn't got yit."

"So do I," fervently responded his companion.

It was about mid-day, but neither party thought of hunger. As they neared the theater of action, the interest of both seemed to intensify.

For a considerable distance, they followed the route of the river; but, at the en't of several miles, they turned eastward and plunged into the thickest of the woods.

Everywhere the track of the freshet was visible. Although the Rattlesnake river had by no means fallen to its usual level, yet it could be easily seen that it had subsided fully a dozen feet.

A person unused to the woods would not have observed that they were traveling over ground that had been frequently traversed before; but the route they were pursuing had the appearance of having been swept by a fierce, narrow stream of water which had wound through the country in every imaginable direction.

"That's the'r path," said Kyle, instinctively modulating his voice to its lowest key. "Foller that and we'd both go headlong into the hornets' nest of a village."

"How far off?"

"Not fur; look out we don't run on a lot of 'em unaware. More than fifty pair of feet have tramped this path since mornin'."

A short time afterward, and they had reached the immediate vicinity of the Delaware village. Only a few rods further, and the hunter announced to his companion that his part of the labor was ended.

"Can I do nothing more?" he asked, in a tone of disappointment.

"Nothin'; you see I'm jist to take a look 'round, and one pair of eyes can do that, while one body ain't quite so apt to git seen as two would be."

"Well, be as quick as you can."

"Keep still, and don't stir, fur if you wander off, thar ain't no time to hunt you up."

With this precaution on the part of Kyle, he took his departure, with the noislessness of a "shadow of the night."

Left alone, Havens contented himself as best as he could. Where one was a prey to such intense anxiety, it could not but be that a brief period of time would seem intolerably long.

Minute after minute passed until fully an hour had gone, a space of duration which, as Havens afterward expressed it, seemed at least a dozen times as long.

But, finally, when our hero was about to despair, a slight noise caught his ear, and looking up, he saw his smiling friend standing beside him.

"Well, what is it?" was the eager inquiry.

"I've been clean around the village, and the end of it is, the gal ain't thar, nor is the chief—that's sartin."

"From your expression, I think that is good news," remarked Havens, with a smile.

"Yas; I'd rather hev it that way than any other."

"What are we to do?"

"Now, if we can head 'em off, afore they g^r back or run afoot of another party of skunks, we've got a sure thang of

it, but that's the rub. Howsumever, we can't tell till we've tried."

Kyle was a man of action, and he instantly started off on the back-track.

He had gone but a few steps, when he abruptly halted, and turned toward Havens, with an air of perplexity upon his face.

"Thar's one thing I ain't 'zactly satisfied about," he said.

His friend waited for him to explain, which he did in a few words.

"I didn't see nothin' of Cut Nose nor Quigley; they ain't in the village."

"Where are they?"

"I hope they hain't gone after the chief, too; fur it will make a tremendous ugly job of it, if we've got to fight them both."

"If the lady's safety is not endangered thereby, I would be glad of it," said Brandon, with compressed lips, as he recalled the persecuting ferocity the renegade had displayed toward the fair one who held such supreme control over the emotions of his heart.

"My sentiments," said Kyle; "but jist thar the trouble comes in. It would be bad fur her. Either one of 'em would knife her, the minute they thought thar was any chance of her fallin' out of thar hands into ours."

The young man turned pale at this announcement, but he controlled the fury that was raging in his breast.

In the meantime, the day was wearing rapidly away and time was of the first importance. The hunter still kept to the path, but although he strode along at a rapid gait, he did not forget his usual caution.

When near the river, they left the beaten track they had been pursuing, and walked back over the same steps they had made during their coming.

Shortly after, they reached the river, and followed down its eastern shore, carefully scanning the water on the look-out for the expected boat and also for their enemies, who, there was reason to suppose, were crossing the river, or were hunting.

This conjecture of the hunter appeared the more probable from the fact that occasionally the reports of guns reached their ears.

They arrived at the spot where they had concealed their canoe, and had descended a few rods below, when Kyle uttered the startling exclamation :

"Thar they be this minute!"

At the same time he drew our hero back into the concealment of the wood ; but not until the latter had caught sight of a canoe near the other side of the stream, heading toward them, and containing several occupants.

"That's the boat, and the gal is in it," added Kyle, whose excitement seemed scarcely less than that of Havens.

With rapidly-beating hearts, the two men waited and watched its approach.

CHAPTER XIV.

DIPLOMACY.

THERE was no mistake. Flying Antelope, his wife, two children, and his adopted daughter, Adrian Woodland, were in the canoe, and the stalwart Delaware was heading directly toward the point where the two hunters had hastily concealed themselves.

"Why does he cross here," inquired Havens, "when his village is further up-stream?"

"For the same reason that I done ; when the water runs so fast, it's easier to walk than to paddle."

It would be difficult to picture the interest with which the two men watched the canoe and its inmates ; for both realized that important events were close at hand.

Fortunately, Kyle had resolved on using argument with the chief before resorting to force. From what he had heard of Flying Antelope, he knew him to be one of the most reasonable and kind-hearted of Indians, which, after all, is not saying a great deal, where so few possessed such attributes of character.

But he was resolved not to be defeated by any decision of the chief. If he could not be induced to give up the captive, after reasonable persuasion had been used, he would not hesitate a moment to use force.

He had grappled with the red Indian too often to be afraid of any of his kin; and although it was in the presence of his wife and children, he stood ready to bury his knife to the hilt in his bosom if he persisted in forcing himself between Adrian Woodland and her friends.

The canoe lightly touched shore, and Flying Antelope sprung out and drew it up on the bank. He was followed by his squaw, and then Adrian and the two children, who all turned their faces toward the stream, as if watching the movements of their leader.

Kyle heard the hurried breathing of Havens, as the two lay side by side on their faces, watching the persons before them, and he admonished him, in the softest of whispers, to keep cool.

Flying Antelope was given time to draw his boat entirely up the bank, when he turned about and found himself face to face with the noted scout, Hugh Kyle!

It so happened that the chief and the entire family faced about at the same time.

The hunter stood without his rifle, and with his arms down at his side, in token of his peaceful intentions, but at the same time Brandon Havens held the chief covered with his weapon, without the savage being aware of it.

At the first indication of treachery, he would have bored him through; and indeed, as it was, he felt strongly tempted to do so, but mercy and justice prevented.

To say that Flying Antelope and his party were surprised would but feebly express it. They were amazed, dumbfounded, and then the habitual self-possession of the chief came to him, and he asked, in his broken English, while his keen eye was fixed upon the scout:

"What brudder want?"

But before the scout could reply, Adrian had recognized him, and she rushed forward and threw herself in his arms.

"At last—at last you have come. Why did you wait so

long?" she asked, sobbing and weeping, as if the greatest grief of her life was upon her.

"Taar! thar I gal, don't go on so!" said Kyle, gently raising her head from his shoulder. "It's all right now, and I've come to take you home; but I must do a little palaver in' first; so jist step aside till I git through with this copper-skin."

"You will not leave me, will you?" she said, turning her streaming eyes upon him.

"Not while thar's a breath of life in this good-fur-nothin' body of mine. It's all fixed, but afore I go I must be perlite to this red-skinned rascal, and bid him good-by in proper style."

"Don't be resentful toward him, for he has been very kind to me."

"That's jist the reason why I'm goin' to let him down easy."

"I think I can persuade him to give his consent to my going with you."

"It don't make much difference about his consent, but on account of his having used yer decent like, and kept that renegade away from yer, I'll consider him a gentleman fur the present. So step aside, gal, if yer please."

Adrian was satisfied at this assurance, and with her soulful eyes turned hopefully upon the bronzed features of the scout, she moved aside so as to give the two men an opportunity to speak to each other.

"The pale-faces mourn for their child," began the hunter, adopting the figurative language common to the Indian, and speaking in the Delaware tongue; "he has come through the woods a long way for his daughter."

"The pale-face has no daughter; she is now the child of Flying Antelope."

"But her heart is far off, where the heads of a father and mother ar' bowed in grief."

"The '*Flower of the Woods*' blooms in the garden of Flying Antelope. Her face is its sunshine; if she goes, all will be darkness."

"But she will light up the night that is around them. They've been in it for many mous. How was the lodge of Flying Antelope before the Flower came to it?"

"It was dark, and it will be dark still; the light of his lodge will be gone forever; the Flower of the Woods can not go."

While this dialogue was going on, Brandon Havens rose from the ground where he lay crouched and walked toward the speakers.

The chief turned his eyes quickly when he caught sight of him, but paid no further attention, and continued his palaver with the hunter.

Adrian started, and her face showed plainly that she was pleased as well as surprised—a manifestation that sent a tingle of delight through the veins of our hero.

Whatever affection of mind the girl had suffered during the last few days was entirely gone now, and she was keen, bright, and herself again.

She smiled pleasantly as Havens came up, and extended her hand to him.

"We parted yesterday rather suddenly," she said, "before I had time to say good-by to you."

"Yes; it was a great surprise and disappointment when I came back and found you gone."

In a few words, Adrian then gave the particulars of her going away with the chief, which, as the reader already knows, tallied in a remarkable manner with the conjecture already made by Kyle, the hunter.

Havens, in turn, related his meeting with the latter, and referred to the numerous and continued attempts that had been made to recover her by her friends.

"He is talking in the Delaware tongue," said she, glancing toward the scout, "and I have learned enough of that to understand what he says."

"He may express himself roughly, but I think he will be understood, for if there is one thing certain, it is that he will carry his point."

"It has been a long and weary time to me, she added, in a sadder voice. "I thought—indeed, I did not know what to think of my being left alone so long."

"But it is understood now?"

"Oh yes; I see where the mistake was made; but God never forsook me, even though it seemed that others had."

Father and mother must have been nearly heart-broken, but I am glad they are both alive and well."

"Yes, and they have Kyle's promise that when they next see his face, you shall be with him."

Adrian's eyes sparkled at this announcement; it would be hard for one to understand the longing of her soul for freedom.

She made no reference to it, but now that hope had been reawakened, she was as determined as Kyle himself that she would not remain behind, no matter what the result of the interview might be.

"You had two bitter enemies," said Havens, after a moment's silence, "Cut Nose and Quigley. Where are they?"

"I last saw them in the village, just before this great storm came up."

"They were not there a few hours ago, when Kyle made a reconnoissance while searching for you."

"I suppose, then, that they are off on a hunt, as they are nearly always together."

"The young man was somewhat disappointed in finding that this chief had adopted you."

"Yes; it was a surprise to him, and he was furious for a time, but it could not be helped, so he said nothing more about it. I always believed, however, that he and Cut Nose had some plan of their own for getting me out of his hands; and when, yesterday, I found myself floating alone on the river, I was terrified at the thought of their finding me. I even longed for the appearance of the chief, and was glad when he found me and took me away, for I knew that, with him, I was safe against those two men at least. Could I have been certain that you were a friend, nothing would have been farther from my wishes than to leave you; but you see I could not know that."

"No; I understand and appreciate it all. I was sorely disappointed at losing you."

And then Havens blushed as he recalled his own fervent declaration before their separation.

But the negotiations of Flying Antelope and Kyle were now coming to a conclusion. The chief insisted on refusing, but finally agreed to refer the matter to Adrian herself.

This was done, and there is little need of telling the result. In a graceful speech, that displayed not a little tact, she convinced the chief that she would never fail to cherish the kindest feelings toward him, in remembrance of his kindness to her; but her heart was with her own people and there she must go.

Thereupon, Flying Antelope folded his blanket around him, and followed by his squaw and children, turned his face northward and walked with rapid strides toward his lodge.

He never once looked back, and in a few minutes he and his family vanished in the wood.

"Now we must make tracks," exclaimed Kyle, "and that party livey, too. That chief means treachery!"

CHAPTER XV.

TREACHERY.

"WHAT do you mean?" inquired Havens.

"I tell yer that chap means to play us a trick; he's been clever 'nough with the gal and all that, but thar's no trustin' a red-skin."

The hunter waited until the Delawares had been gone some time, and then he began moving up-stream, toward the point where his canoe had been left.

Upon reaching the spot, it was found that the string had been cut, and the boat was gone.

Kyle uttered an oath.

"Jest what I expected."

"Let us take *his* canoe!" said Brandon, turning back.

"Of course, but we can't handle that like my own," replied the scout, as he turned and led the way down-stream.

But another disappointment awaited them. Upon reaching the spot, this canoe also had disappeared, and they were without boat of any kind.

The face of the scout fairly flamed lightning. He was ~~forborn~~.

"Foller me," said he; "we'll take to the woods; that's a short cut home, but it's mighty risky."

Matters began to look dark, but Kyle never once lost his presence of mind, or hesitated as to what course to pursue.

When he discovered that both boats were gone, he turned about and struck boldly into the woods, moving eastward, at as rapid a gait as possible.

He was certain that Flying Antelope would put himself in communication with some of his race around him, and there soon would be a hot pursuit.

It was yet early in the afternoon, and it was therefore of the highest importance that they should put all the distance possible between them and their enemies before a combination could be formed, and a pursuit organized.

"If yer knows how to tramp, now's the time to do it," called out the scout as he strode along. "Thar never was such need of gittin' ahead as thar is this minnit!"

"What point are you aiming at?" inquired Havens, as they hurried along.

"Black Creek," was the reply, "and we've got to get thar purty soon ef we want to save our ha'r."

The cause for this rather forcible exclamation was speedily understood. Hugh Kyle's great object was to hide his trail, and so long as they remained in the woods, this was impossible.

There was not the least doubt but that Flying Antelope would collect a party of pursuit as speedily as he could. He had simply yielded because he could not help himself, and he was now doing his utmost to repair his mistake.

The distance between their present location and their destination in Illinois was so great that there was no way by which they could keep out of the reach of the Delawares, except by stratagem.

Impeded as their flight was with the presence of Adrian, it would be comparatively an easy matter for the fleet-footed red-skins to overhaul them, and hence the natural anxiety of Kyle to make the best time possible out of the dangerous neighborhood.

They were walking in this manner, as fast as they could

when a peculiar whoop was heard several hundred yards in their rear.

"That's Cut Nose," exclaimed Kyle.

"What is the meaning of it?"

"Twenty odd years ago, he gave the same whoop when he got on my track, and was sure he had me."

"Then he is on our trail?"

"As sartin as you live, and that ar' whoop is meant to let the others know he's found it."

The face of Adrian blanched at the words of the scout, and she leaned heavily upon the arm of Havens.

"Oh, must we fail again?" she murmured. "I shall die, if we do not reach home."

"While there's life there's hope," replied our hero, who at the same time felt that the latter was diminishing fast. "Keep up your courage, dearest."

The hour of danger tends to draw the cold and formal closer together, and it seemed to Havens in the darkness which was again closing around them, that the fair one by his side never seemed sweeter and nearer and dearer.

He found himself addressing the most endearing epithets, and either she did not object to them, or she did not hear them.

Deeply occupied as they were with the frightful peril which again menaced them, he found time to look admiringly upon the shell-tinted cheek, the wealth of flowing hair, the dark, liquid eyes, now expanded through fear to a size that made them wondrously beautiful, the elastic step, and the form of matchless symmetry.

Adrian, from her long residence among the Delawares, was dressed almost entirely in the costume of an Indian, which, from its brilliant hues, added a wild appearance to her beauty, and made her look like a tropical bird flitting through the forest.

Her color was brightened by the speed which was required to keep pace with the scout, who, angry and furious at the network of peril which seemed to be closing about him, was speeding over the ground at a more rapid gait than he was aware of. He traveled like a man seeking to get away from his own angry passion.

Providentially, Black Creek was near by, and soon the glimmer of the water was seen through the trees.

When the three fugitives reached it, they were almost upon a run. Kyle instantly halted and gazed back, listening the while.

"No one is in sight yit, but it won't be long before they'll be hyar. Last summer, when I went by this creek, I tumbled onto an Injin canoe, and ef it's only hyar yit, that's hope! Look sharp both of yer, and let me know whether yer see any thing like it."

"Is that it yonder?" asked Adrian, pointing to a fallen tree.

"Lord bless yer eyes, that's jist what it ar'," laughed the scout, as he ran rapidly a short distance, and drew forth a small canoe from where it had been stowed bottom upward, beside a large log.

"Jist the thing we wanted," he exclaimed, in great glee. "Now into it, both of yer; that is as soon as I can git it into the water."

He lifted the delicate structure, as though it were as light as gossamer, and ran rapidly to the creek, where it floated like a cork upon the surface.

The next minute Adrian and Brandon had entered the boat, and with paddle in hand Kyle followed them.

Now, under the guidance of heaven, all depended upon the skill of the scout. It was no longer a mere contest of physical endurance, or fleetness of foot, but it was mind against mind, in a field where the Indian was at home.

Kyle well knew that his trail would be followed to the very point of embarkation, when the Delawares would immediately comprehend what had taken place, and then the real search would begin.

Of all persons, the Indian scout must learn to think and act promptly.

Hugh Kyle knew, as well as if he were an Indian himself, what the conclusion of the red-skins would be, when they reached the edge of the creek. Knowing that they had a skilled woodman to contend against, they would decide that he had paddled down-stream, with all the strength at his command, so as to pass as great a distance as possible, and then

either had hid or disembarked at some point that would be likely to escape observation, or he had gone up-stream a considerable way, and done the same thing.

Consequently to head off the party, the savages would divide and proceed as rapidly as possible, one going up and the other down-stream, scrutinizing the shore as they went.

And yet the scout did neither, nor did he cross the stream at all.

That which he decided upon doing, and which he did without an instant's hesitation, required no little "nerve," and was the very last maneuver that would have occurred to nine persons out of ten.

He stealthily paddled about a hundred feet up-stream, and then halted. Fortunately for his scheme, both sides were deeply fringed with luxuriant undergrowth, which offered the best concealment possible under the circumstances.

Scarcely a hundred feet were passed, when Kyle shoved the canoe under the overhanging undergrowth and carefully replaced the disturbed branches behind him.

Then he put the boat in such a position that there was considerable undergrowth between it and the shore.

"Now," he whispered, with a warning motion of his finger, "not a word from either of yer. The red-skins ar' all about us, and they've got powerful sharp ears I can tell yer."

His warning was remembered and implicitly followed, although it was incomprehensible to Havens that his friend should have halted at a point so near their place of embarkation. Had he been given the charge of affairs, he would have improved the time by getting away as far as possible from their enemies.

But Kyle had halted here, because he knew none of the Indians would suspect such a thing, and consequently the chances were that scarcely any search at all would be made of the place where they were actually concealed.

This was the reason for his entering the lion's mouth, and the result showed his wisdom.

They had been here less than five minutes, when the same whoop that had first caught their ear was again heard, sound

ing from the place where the fugitives had taken to the water.

Kyle smiled and looked in the faces of his friends, but neither party said any thing. All understood that Cut Nose had discerned something and had signaled the fact to his companions who no doubt were rapidly hastening to the spot.

The silence that followed lasted perhaps fifteen minutes and then, as Havens was just framing his lips to ask a whispered question, the scout raised his finger for him to keep still.

"'Sh! they're s'archin'!"

Almost at the same moment, a cautious step was heard upon the ground near them, and immediately after the bushes were separated, by one of the Indians.

Nothing suspicious meeting his gaze, he then withdrew and walked away, soon passing up-stream and beyond hearing.

Minute after minute passed and nothing further was heard of the Delawares. Whether they were above or below or on the other side of the river could only be conjectured, but the supposition of the hunter was that they had gone on up the stream, and were at that moment at a considerable distance away.

As the afternoon advanced, Kyle determined to make another reconnoissance to assure himself of the exact condition of affairs. Admonishing his friends to maintain the strictest silence, and on no account to move away from their position, he stealthily lowered himself over the side of the canoe, sinking to his waist in the water, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XVI

THROUGH THE FIRE.

THOSE were happy moments, although surrounded by peril, when Brandon Havens and Adrian Woodland were left together.

They dared not make any audible utterances, but "soft eyes

looked love to eyes that spoke again," and the memory of those blissful moments lingered by them both through after life.

Time flew on golden wings, and they scarcely noted the unusually long time that Kyle was absent. The sun sunk low, but they heeded it not. What was all the world to them, so long as they could bask in the sunshine of each others' love?

But they were sharply reminded of their dangerous position, by the near explosion of several guns, followed by the same blank silence that had reigned almost continuously since their presence on the creek.

By this time, both began to feel some natural concern at the prolonged absence of the scout, and they exchanged whispered conjectures as to the cause. Connecting this with the discharge of the guns, they were filled with the greatest apprehensions as to his safety.

This uncertainty after a time became so painful that Havens made the rash conclusion of stealing out for a short distance, to see whether any thing could be learned of the cause of his absence.

He was earnestly dissuaded against it, by Adrian, but he promised to use great care and stealth, and the next minute he followed in the footsteps (if such an expression be admissible) of Kyle, and our heroine found herself, for the time being, left entirely alone.

Perhaps a half-hour had passed, when the welcome sound of an approaching person was heard, and instantly after the bushes parted to admit him.

"I am so glad you have returned; for I have been half dead ever since—"

Adrian Woodland suddenly paused, for as the bushes parted neither Brandon Havens nor Hugh Kyle appeared, but in their stead, the hideous, grinning face of Cut Nose!

Overcome by terror, the poor girl bowed her head and covered her face, as if to receive the stroke of the expected tomahawk.

The red-skin, however, contented himself with beginning to shove the canoe through the bushes. As he stood about waist-deep in the water, this was an easy matter, and he moved through the undergrowth, using the boat as a wedge.

to open the way for himself, while the unfortunate Adrian sat almost unconscious, as the bushes brushed over her head.

By-and-by the water began to deepen, and when it reached the arm-pits of the savage he drew himself up into the boat and took the paddle.

With a little more labor, he sent the canoe into open water and then plying the oar with the skill natural to an Indian, he sped swiftly down the creek toward the river.

Had Adrian but glanced up, she would have observed in the appearance of the red-skin an action and manner which betokened an expectancy of meeting some one.

He glanced from shore to shore, and frequently held his paddle motionless in his hand, as if listening for some expected signal.

Soon it came, in the shape of a whistle on the right. With one sweep of his paddle, he sent the frail vessel against the bank, and then halted, without once motioning to get out of the canoe.

He had to wait but a few moments, when a light foot-step was heard, and instantly after Zeke Quigley, the renegade, stepped into the canoe, and it resumed its way down-stream.

Sad Adrian could barely keep her senses, when she realized that she was again in the society and in the power of these two dreadful men.

When she recognized Quigley, she again covered her face with her hands, and only prayed that he would not speak to her, but even that was not answered.

"Wal, my booty, yer didn't succeed in gittin' off this time, did yer?"

She made no reply, and after waiting a moment or two the renegade continued:

"I don't want to hurt yer feelings, gal, but ef ye've any lingerin' 'fection fur that old codger that yer called Kyle, ye may as well drop a tear."

A chill thrilled through her as she comprehended very well the meaning of those words; still she resolutely refused to break the silence, and Quigley continued:

"Ef that ever was a feller that went under bootiful it was that same chap. Three bullets right through him, afore they lifted his ha'r, but he had to come to it at last."

The sobs that escaped Adrian told how great was her grief. Poor Kyle! her faithful friend! he was gone at last!

But the culminating grief was now to come.

"And that 'ere younker: he was *my* game, and when he come nosin' 'round, I jist let daylight through him, and that war the end of him—"

A grasping scream escaped Adrian—her feelings overcame her, and she swooned away entirely.

She recovered herself in a few minutes, and found that the two savages had not given her the least attention or notice.

Observing that she was herself again, the renegade continued:

"Rather fainty, eh? Sorry, but you must get used to these things. As Flying Antelope is now out of the way, I'll have more time to give to you."

He rattled on in this aimless, unfeeling manner, while the canoe glided swiftly forward.

But, the words came to Adrian, as words come to us in dreams, and they finally ceased to make any impression.

She was aroused from her stupor by the increased loudness of the words of the two men in the canoe. The hum of their conversation had been in her ears, but she had not noticed their language, until their voices grew so loud as to alarm her.

Then she realized that they were quarreling, and growing more angry each moment, and what was worse they were wrangling over her.

As she witnessed their flashing eyes, and scowling faces, she could only cower in the prow of the boat and keep as far away from them as possible, and ejaculating a prayer for the protection of the only one who could assist her.

Every word seemed to add fuel to the fire, and it looked as if a personal collision would take place then and there in the boat.

Finally the exasperated Delaware swerved the canoe about and shot it with a sharp thud against the bank, and springing out, drew his knife and braced himself for the encounter that was now inevitable.

There was no escaping it, and the renegade leaped out with his drawn knife in his hand.

The transfixed Adrian was conscious of the lightning-like sweeping of the muscular arms, the thrusts and crossings, the muttered exclamations, and then, Zeke Quigley fell forward on his face, with the hunting-knife thrust into his heart.

For one moment, the exultant Cut Nose surveyed the lifeless form, and then with an evil gleam he advanced toward the horrified Adrian.

But ere he reached her, a dark form shot out of the wood like a meteor, striking and bearing him to the ground, where, for a few seconds, there was a furious struggling, and then, as Kyle rose to his feet, he exclaimed :

"Thar, Cut Nose, you may as well keep company with Zeke! You and I have squared accounts at last, and now it rests between you and the One above!"

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

The encounter between Cut Nose and the renegade, the death of the latter, the bursting of Hugh Kyle upon the scene, and the killing of the Delaware himself—all took place in such a short period of time, that the bewildered Adrian Woodland did not comprehend her deliverance until the canoe was speeding over the creek, propelled by the paddle of the scout, whose bronzed face melted into an expression of tender pity, as he looked upon her, and said more to himself than to her.

"Poor gal! you've seen sights that no white gal has a right to see, but you'll never have to go through it ag'in."

"Is he dead?" she asked, turning her wistful eyes toward him.

"Who do you mean—Zeke or Cut Nose? I guess that neither one of 'em is of much account jist now."

... "No, no—he—Brandon Havens!"

"Bless yer heart, no, gal. I left him half an hour ago, hid alongside an oak log, half crazy 'cause the boat was gone. While we were watchin' thar, the canoe went right along under our noses, with Zeke Quigley and Cut Nose squatted in it. Wal, thar I ef yer ever see'd a man excited, that young chap war. It war all I could do to keep him down to the ground, and I had to jerk him back two, three times, and sw'nr I'd break his head afore he'd mind.

"Yer see thar war two of us and two of them, and he wanted us each to send a bullet through our man; but thar war the sartinty of bein' heard by the others, and bringin' the whole caboodle down on us. So I made him keep quiet, while I foller'd along waitin' fur the chance that I knowed I'd soon git.

"When they begun to quarrel, I see'd how it war comin' out, and when they went ashore to fight, I jist looked on and enj'yed it, and when thar war only one man left, then I sailed in and wiped him out, and made things square. So, gal, yer hain't got no reason to fear nothin' from Cut Nose nor Zeke Quigley."

While Kyle was imparting this interesting information, he was swinging the paddle, and "hugging" the shore as closely as possible.

The sun had set, and in the gloom of the wood every thing along shore was in a shadow.

Softly the light canoe glided up the creek, the scout gradually slowing the paddle, until finally he ceased labor altogether, and carried forward by its already acquired impetus, the canoe kept on, slowly slackening the speed, until finally it came to a dead stand-still, with its prow touching the shore as lightly as the floating feather.

At the same moment, Brandon Havens came out from the concealment, and silently stepped into the boat.

But Kyle still held the vessel motionless.

"We must wait hyar a while till it gits darker," said he, by way of explanation. "The copper-skins ar' ruther plenty in these parts."

When a half-hour had worn by, it was too dark to see across the creek. During all that time not a sound of their

soothing had been heard. Every thing indicated that they had been thrown off the track altogether.

And during the same half-hour, Adrian Woodland and Brandon Havens exchanged experiences, since their separation, conversing in those low, subdued tones, so naturally assumed by those whose souls are drawn toward each other.

As silently as a phantom of the night, the canoe glided out from the shore, and continued its upward course. Kyle would not allow his friends to converse even in whispers, and with such skill did he handle his paddle, that the canoe might have brushed the scalp-lock of the crouching Delaware without his ear detecting any sound.

There was a soothing influence in this gliding motion; and when Havens saw the head of Adrian Woodland begin to droop, he carefully folded the shawl about her shoulders, made her position as easy as possible, and she slept the dreamless sleep of health and innocence.

Even Brandon himself was not proof against the somnolent effect of their easy motion, and he soon dropped off into the realms of unconsciousness.

It was past midnight when the canoe came to a stand-still, near what appeared to be a clearing, and the scout stepped ashore.

Even now he would not have halted, had he not reached and really passed the point where he promised to "call" for the brothers Gaskill, whom, it will be recollected, he had instructed to await his coming.

Touching the shoulder of Havens, he awoke him, and said:

"I've got to leave yer fur an hour or two, and yer must keep watch over the gal."

"I'll do so," replied our hero, promptly. "Are we in danger?"

"Not from the red-skins; but once in a while thar's such a critter as a b'ar or painter that comes nosin' and smellin' round."

An hour's tramp brought the hunter to the cavern, where he expected to find his friends asleep; but, somewhat to his surprise, it was empty.

Thinking there might be some explanation of their leaving

thus, he flashed the powder in his pan, and by its light discovered a piece of wadding-paper upon the floor upon which he saw something written in pencil.

Not being able to read script, but satisfied that it contained what he wanted to know, he carefully preserved it, and started back to the canoe.

He handed the blank piece of wadding to Havens, stacking where he had found it.

Our hero read it, and found that it was written by Edward Gaskill, addressed to Kyle, and stated that shortly after the departure of the scout, the appearance of Indians on the hunt for trail, in their close vicinity, had so aroused their fears that they deemed it the part of wisdom to get out of such a dangerous country as soon as possible, and had started for home, and where, it may as well be stated here, they arrived in due time.

"I'm glad they've gone, fur we won't be bothered with them!" remarked the scout. "They know'd, of course, that I'd find yer if yer was among the livin'!"

The rifle of the latter was an unfailing reliance for food, and our friends never suffered in that particular during the few days occupied on their homeward tramp.

We draw the veil over the meeting between Adrian Woodland and her parents. Our feeble pen can not paint the touching picture, and we dismiss it with the simple tear of sympathy. He who doeth all things well had chastened them sorely, but while He had wounded, He had wounded to heal.

And of the growth of that all-potent passion of our nature between Adrian Woodland and Brandon Havens—of the tender meetings—the mutual avowal—the betrothal—the happiness of the fruition of true love—oh, gentle reader; hast thou not seen it all in imagination, and does aught remain for us to tell?

THE END.

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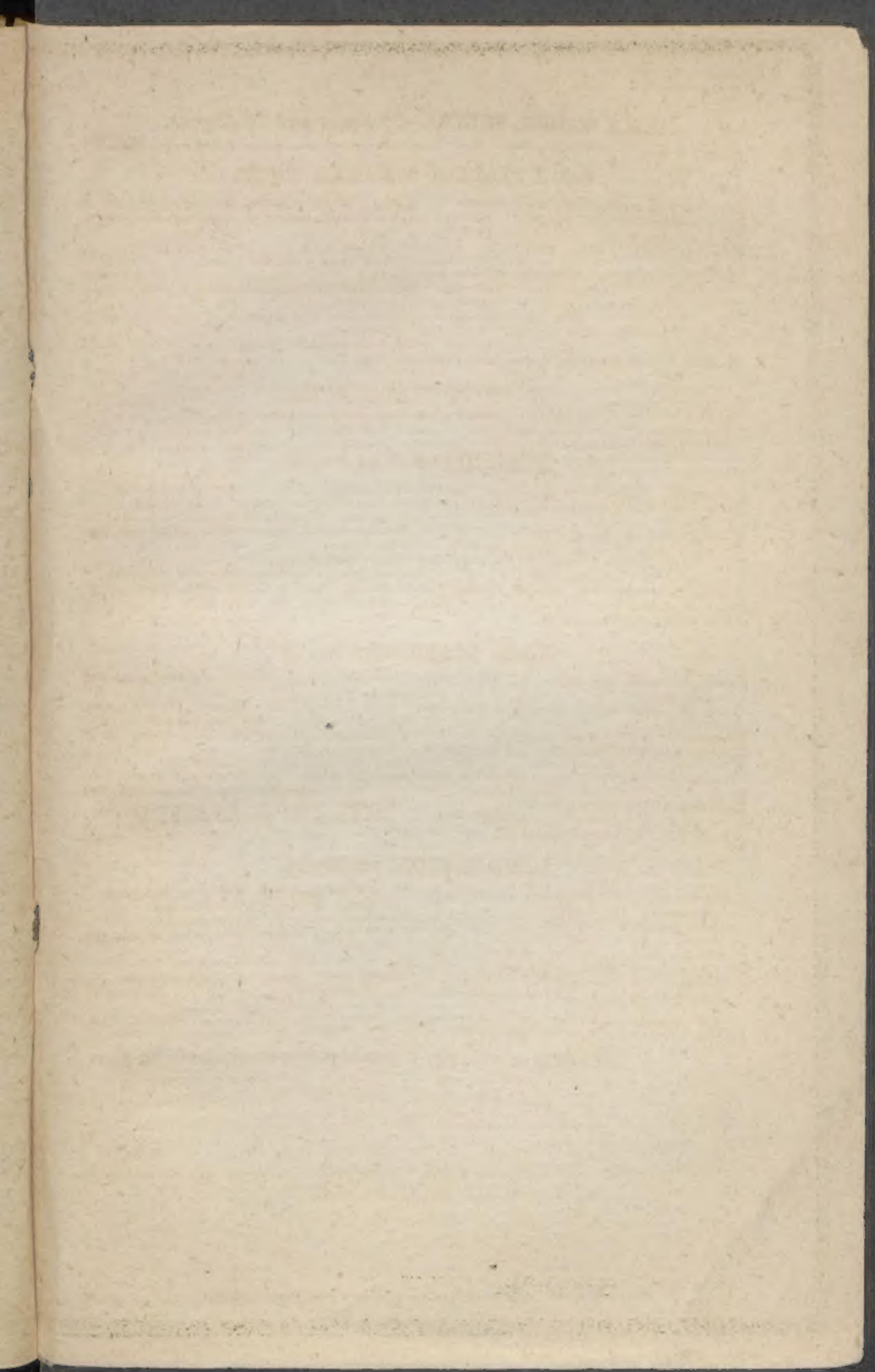
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